CANELO-KOVALEV PREVIEW

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING

PACMAN VS. PRINCE

A POWER PUNCHING DREAM FIGHT

WITH GUEST EDITOR **PRINCE NASEEM HAMED**

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By Mitch Abramson

With the spectacles each created, Manny Pacquiao vs. Prince Naseem Hamed would've been quite a sight.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD SLONE

OPENING SHOT

Young lightweight contender Devin Haney proved the old "Kill the body, and the head will follow" boxing adage as he outclassed Zaur Abdullaev to a corner retirement after four punishing rounds on September 13 at Madison Square Garden.

PHOTO BY ANTHONY GEATHERS

PUT THE POM-POMS DOWN

Recently, while visiting my parents at my childhood home, I came across boxes of old audio- and videotapes with hundreds of fights from the '70s and '80s that I recorded as a kid. I threw a couple in, and one thing stood out immediately: the commentary! It was like night and day compared to today's biased, promoter-friendly, house fighter cheerleaders! The network divisiveness and scared-to-offend mouthpieces of today are taking the neutrality away and not allowing us to enjoy the sport to its fullest. They're just adding to the "other side of the street" mentality that keeps us from seeing the best fight the best!

Chris Schofield
toetotoe2009@live.com

ONCE IS ENOUGH

The use of replays to change a third-round knockout to a "no contest" in the Julio Cesar Martinez-Charlie Edwards fight (on the Lomachenko-Campbell undercard) in London on August 31 sets a dangerous precedent for the sport.

WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman lobbying the British Boxing Board of Control to reverse the call made by referee Mark Lyson is not much different than the actions of Soviet officials influencing the outcome of the 1972 Olympic men's basketball final in Munich against Team USA. In boxing, sanctioning bodies have a vested interest in the outcome. They should in no way be involved in referee decisions. Including any form of replay review in boxing only opens the door to more influence by outside interests.

Boxing is a subjective sport. Referees and judges are not perfect, but their expert, real-time decisions are the closest we are going to come to fair, unbiased officiating and scoring in the sweet science of prizefight pugilism.

Blair Schilling
Des Moines, Iowa

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Your first point hinges on the question of who gets to initiate a replay, and you're right – that does indeed create the possibility of bias, and it's a serious concern. But you also argue that replays shouldn't be used at all, and while rules are rules and should be applied in all cases, popular or not, you picked an unusual example to make that point. Usually people are against replays because "close calls" are just a result of the natural order in boxing – three humans in a ring, sometimes making mistakes, but it all balances out and we shouldn't mess with it by introducing new technology. But this was nowhere near a close call. Martinez landed a blatantly late, vicious liver punch on a man whose knee was firmly planted on the canvas. Disqualifying him would've been justified, and the fact that Lyson not only issued no consequences but also proceeded to count Edwards out is disturbing. In this case, a replay saved the day from a truly botched call.

RANKINGS DISPARITY

I am not complaining, but could you please explain the logic in having Terence Crawford at No. 2 and Errol Spence Jr. at No. 6 in the pound-for-pound ratings while at the same time having Crawford at No. 2 and Spence at No. 1 in the welterweight class? I enjoy your magazine. Thank you!

Marvin Johnson
Piney Flats, Tennessee

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Keep in mind that the P4P list is supposed to be based on a fighter's quality regardless of weight class. Crawford has been on the list since May 2015 when he was a junior welterweight titleholder, and that was based in large part on the fact that he had already been the Ring champion at lightweight. So that was his starting point, and he's been moving up ever since. Basically he had a big head start on Spence, who didn't get on the list until September 2017, not long after he won the IBF welterweight title – his first – against Kell Brook. By that point, Crawford was the unified champ at 140 and was already at No. 3 on the P4P list. But he wasn't even rated at 147 because he hadn't fought there yet, whereas Spence was already at No. 2, just below Keith Thurman. So in that division, Spence had a head start on Crawford.

So they're two separate things, divisional lists and P4P lists, and it's not uncommon for a guy like Crawford who plows through multiple weight classes to be on the P4P list but not No. 1 in a division he just entered. Crawford has the credentials and time put in to be higher on the P4P, but his accomplishments at 147 don't yet exceed those of Spence.

TWEET OF THE MONTH

WRITE TO THE RING! Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 90254, Brooklyn, NY 11209 comeoutwriting@gmail.com ★ Emailed letters will include a writer's email address unless a city and state of origin are provided. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

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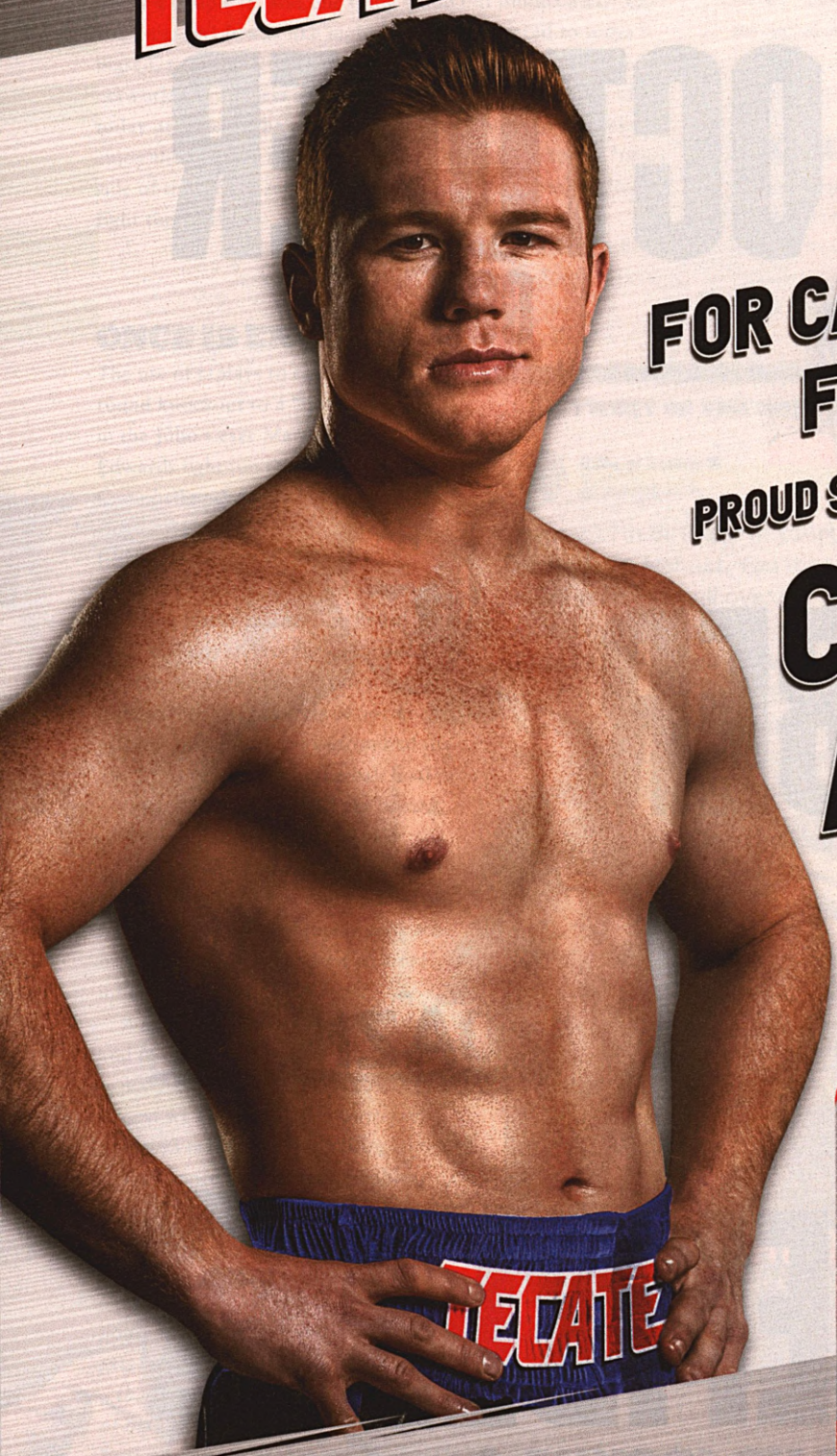

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THE PRINCE WHO WOULD BE KING

Hamed was a brilliant boxer, but his performances didn't just start in the ring.

The confidence, the charisma, the showmanship, the acrobatics, it all began when I was an amateur. I wanted to be completely different, and the whole thing was to form something original, something unique, something that other fighters didn't have that would be effective onscreen. I developed that as a kid; I worked on it every single year until I turned professional, mastering a form of entertainment that I knew would attract a new audience and capture the world's imagination.

Before I came on the scene, there wasn't as much interest in the lower weight classes. It was all about the middleweights and the heavyweights. I wanted to be a complete game-changer, a jaw-dropper, a pioneer; I wanted to change boxing. When I was a kid, people said to me that I wouldn't do anything in the sport. They said I was too small, too weak, too frail. They said, "What are you gonna do in boxing?" I said, "Well, I'm gonna change boxing. I'm gonna do something that no one has ever done!" Muhammad Ali was my biggest boxing inspiration. Sugar Ray Leonard, too. But I still felt that I could be different to these amazing fighters. It's all about how you portray yourself, and perception is everything.

JOHN GICHIGI

Naseem Hamed's natural talent and flair for showmanship were literally over the top, and the combination made him a transcendent star.

I wanted to enter the ring in a way that nobody had seen before. I'm not just talking about the flying carpets and all the different entrances. I'm talking about how I would enter the ring, flipping over the top rope. I just thought that when you look at that, visually it looks very entertaining, very special, very charismatic – it's swagger. The word "swagger" wasn't really used in my day, but that was swagger all over. I invented swagger. In later years, I was recognized as the fighter who changed boxing in the lighter weights. My deal with HBO – which was a brilliant deal – opened up the gateway for all these smaller fighters to get paid. Lennox Lewis was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world at the time, and I was getting paid just as much as him – and I was a featherweight.

I won several world titles, achieved all of my goals in the sport and stopped at 28, so I'm always asked if I would have beaten this guy or that guy. Dream fights are hypothetical, but it is nice to think about great fighters going against other great fighters and picking a winner. The thing is, though, I've never thought that old fighters are better than the modern fighters. I can't imagine anyone from the Fabulous Four – Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns or Roberto Duran – losing to fighters from the '30s, '40s and '50s. I just think the Fabulous Four were before their time and they were a lot better. Sugar Ray Robinson is the obvious exception, but in my opinion, Leonard was better than him. He may have been named after Robinson as "Sugar" but – for me – Leonard is the better fighter.

Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali is another massive dream fight, and I've always favored Tyson to be the victor, but only if he's between 20 and 22 years old. Tyson is not a slow fighter like Sonny Liston. His hand speed and the way he moved his head made him special; he was one of the best defensive heavyweights that's ever lived. The speed of Tyson coming forward, moving his head side to side, made him great defensively, but then he would switch to offense and knock you out.

I was recently asked what I think of me in my prime going against Manny Pacquiao. I'll say this: Manny always had a great work rate, but as good as he was, I saw a lot of flaws in him, a lot of mistakes. There were a lot of opportunities to hit him, and a prime example is the knockout shot he took against Juan Manuel Marquez in fight four. You could see that coming, and Marquez had trained to land that punch (there is footage available on YouTube that shows Marquez knocking out a sparring partner with a near-identical counter right in training camp). Now, I'm not bringing Manny down, because to compete at top level for so many years shows that he's a super-great. I take my hat off to Manny, and I think he's an unbelievable fighter. He had some serious strengths in boxing, and he was very quick. His fights with Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales and Marquez were amazing, and what's even more amazing is that he came from a much lower weight division than any of them. He earned his nickname as "The Mexican Destroyer," and I was always happy for him.

But if he meets me at my best, it gets very interesting. Me as a junior featherweight or in my early days at featherweight, I think that would have been an unbelievable fight. The thing is, I've always got what my opponents haven't got, and that's superior punching power. Once they're hit, that's it. I'm confident that – not just Manny – but even Floyd Mayweather Jr. back in the day, when we weren't that far apart in weight, there's no fighter going to go 12 rounds without me hitting them. Whoever I hit properly, I always finish the fight, and that's a good feeling to have. I always felt that Manny and Morales had perfect styles for me. I thought it would be way harder for them than it would be for me because of styles. Their styles were very conventional, and the way they held their hands; that's easy for me. Even though I wasn't at my best against Barrera, he was a much better defensive fighter than Manny or Morales.

A lot of fans won't agree that I would have beaten Manny, but I'm not sensitive to what people say. Some people are for you and some are against you. The thing is, I believe in myself. In my prime, during my hottest nights in my sport, it didn't matter if it was Manny Pacquiao. It didn't matter who it was; if I hit them, then I could knock out anybody. Out of 36 wins, I had 31 knockouts. I'm sure there are people who feel that a lot of fighters would give Naz a good fight or a beating, but you never can tell unless it happens. But I 100 percent believe that I had the style to beat a Manny Pacquiao, because I would have walked him onto something. I was a counterpuncher, and I never felt that he was hard to hit. RING

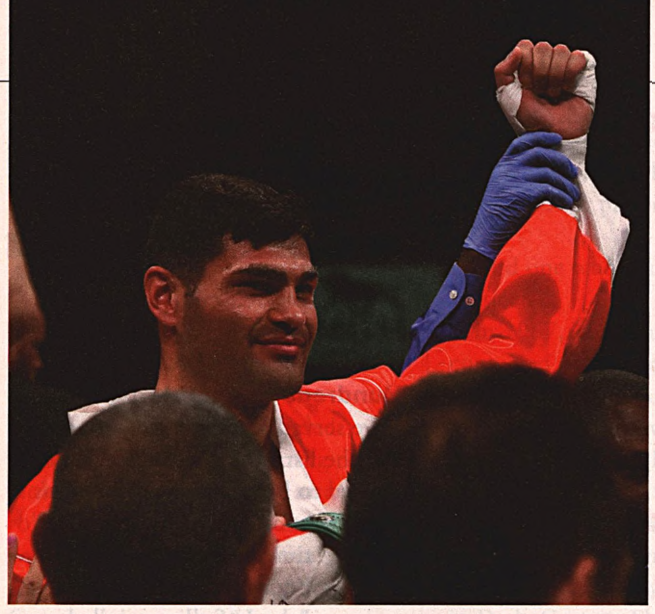
- Prince Naseem Hamed, former featherweight champion of the world and 2015 Hall of Fame inductee.

VASILIY LOMACHENKO

Vasiliy Lomachenko had a more difficult opponent than some expected in Luke Campbell, but the lightweight champ adapted, as he always does.

Of all the legitimate lightweight contenders, Luke Campbell looked like the candidate to give The Ring Magazine's 135-pound champ and reigning pound-for-pound king the most trouble. Size was a factor in that analysis. Vasiliy Lomachenko was nigh untouchable at 130 pounds, but he struggled to defeat Jorge Linares and Jose Pedraza while collecting the WBA and WBO lightweight titles. Style was also a factor. Campbell is a handful for any 135-pounder – tough, tall, rangy, southpaw and smart – as he proved in a split-decision loss to then-Ring champ Linares in 2017. A better version of the former amateur star from Hull, England, showed up for his second shot at the championship; on August 31 at London's O2 Arena, he proved boxing's wiseguys correct by extending his fellow 2012 Olympic champ the distance in a competitive, fan-friendly chess match. Campbell made Lomachenko miss and think. He counterpunched and worked the body of the Ukrainian marvel. And yet, Lomachenko still won a clear decision by lopsided scores of 119-108 (twice) and 119-109. Just as he did against Linares and Pedraza, Lomachenko rallied hard when challenged. As sharp as Campbell was, Lomachenko, who badly hurt the game challenger to the body in Round 5 and took over the second half of the bout, was more dialed-in, active and aggressive. Lomachenko scored a knockdown in Round 11 to punctuate the performance, winning the vacant WBC belt and moving one step closer to his goal of becoming the first undisputed lightweight champion since Pernell Whitaker.

RICHARD HEATHCOTE



Hrgovic's popularity following the 2016 Olympics gave him a readymade fan base for his transition to the pros.

NEW FACES

FILIP HRGOVIC

By Anson Wainwright

Croatia isn't renowned for producing world-class boxers. Instead, the country that forms the southeast coast of the Adriatic Sea excels at soccer; in 2018, their national team was the runner-up at the World Cup.

Rising heavyweight hopeful Filip Hrgovic (9-0, 7 knockouts) intends to change that in the next couple of years. But growing up in Zagreb, neither boxing nor soccer was Hrgovic's first love.

"I remember most that as a young boy I trained in basketball. That was the whole world to me, and I wanted to become an NBA player," Hrgovic told The Ring. "Later, age 13, I decided to do boxing in one local boxing gym that was quite good, and since then I never stopped."

Hrgovic went on to enjoy a stellar amateur career. He won gold at the 2010 Youth World Championships, beating future heavyweight titleholder Joseph Parker and future Olympic gold medalist Tony Yoka along the way. He added gold at the 2015 European Championships and reached the quarterfinals of three World Championships. In 2016, he won an Olympic bronze medal in Rio. Such was his status on the amateur scene that he was awarded the highly prestigious Order of Danica Hrvatska medal for his service to sports in his homeland.

Along the way, in 2013, Hrgovic gained further notoriety when he cut David Haye during a sparring session, causing the cancellation of Haye's fight with Tyson Fury.

With little else to achieve in the amateur game and already a sought-after prospect for the pros, the 6-foot-6 Croatian exited with a record of roughly 90-10 and signed with European powerhouse Sauerland Promotion. He made his debut with a first-round knockout of Raphael Zumbano in September 2017 and has progressed quickly.

"Filip is a superstar in Croatia," said Kalle Sauerland. "Croatia is a small country (its population is less than half that of London), so when they have an athlete coming through on the international stage, it's a great source of pride and inspiration for them. The government helped him, and the mayor of Zagreb even built Filip his own gym. It was a wise investment, as 2016 became Croatia's most successful summer Olympics in their history, and Filip became the first and only boxer to win a medal for Croatia. In just his seventh pro fight, he boxed former world title challenger Kevin Johnson in his home city of Zagreb and had a 43 percent television market share – these are astronomical numbers.

"Overall, the success of the Olympics and the (soccer) team at the World Cup has created somewhat of a sporting renaissance in Croatia – a movement that Filip is right at the forefront of. Croatians are proud and supportive people, and you just need to look at Filip's Instagram (currently at about 51,000 followers) to see how his nation and fellow athletes support him."

The 27-year-old, who grew up in a middle-class family, is happy with the pace he is moving at.

"The most important ranking is inside of me, and I'm number one in my mind. And I truly believe in that," he said. "I'm very glad that I'm ranked so high with not so many fights, but that is just warmup."

Hrgovic trains with the renowned Pedro Diaz in Miami, Florida. Diaz has worked with a wide array of athletes from different contact sports and is hugely impressed by his latest project.

"(He is) a very serious boxer with excellent discipline and dedication," said the Cuban-born coach. "(He) is very intelligent and has a good accuracy in hitting, which is very important at heavyweight. I see him as one of the biggest prospects in boxing."

Nisse Sauerland, the younger of two brothers who head up Sauerland Promotion, is keen to continue pushing for the biggest and best opportunities for his fighter. Earlier this year, the company was able to broker a deal with Eddie Hearn's Matchroom to co-promote Hrgovic in North America, where his two most recent fights have taken place on DAZN cards.

"The first priority is to get Filip a big fight before the end of the year," said Nisse. "There's been some discussions about him fighting in Saudi Arabia on the (Andy) Ruiz vs. (Anthony) Joshua undercard, and providing we can get a good name, then that's something we would be very interested in."

Kalle Sauerland is in agreement and believes Hrgovic will one day become unified heavyweight champion.

"He's boxed in five different countries in his first nine fights, and that's to grow his profile and showcase his skills to a worldwide audience," said Kalle. "There's a reason he's known as 'El Animal,' and we are looking forward to the current champions finding out why. The king of the new era is ready to take center stage."

Hrgovic is fully on board with the plan.

"My goal is to become the first Croatian heavyweight world champion in history and hold all the belts," said Hrgovic. "That is my dream since I started, and I'm going for it. With every fight, I'm closer and closer."

Jordan Pollock helped coordinate this feature. The Ring appreciates his assistance. Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

Jack Johnson, pictured here in Paris with his wife, Irene Pineau, is one of many heavyweight champions who served time behind bars.

HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONS IN PRISON

Hundreds of notable fighters have served lengthy terms in prison. But the list is more exclusive when limited to heavyweight champions who spent an extended period of time under lock and key. I'm not talking about John L. Sullivan, jailed on numerous occasions for public intoxication and fighting (both in and out of the ring). Nor am I referencing beltholders like Michael Moorer, Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman, each of whom had brushes with the law. I'm talking about heavyweight champions who served long, hard time. Let's look at who they are.

JACK JOHNSON: In 1913, Johnson was convicted of transporting two women across state lines for immoral purposes and, as the culmination of the legal campaign against him, sentenced to a year and a day in prison. He jumped bail, fled the country and, after spending seven years in exile, returned to the United States and surrendered to federal agents to serve 10 months in Leavenworth.

ROCKY MARCIANO: While stationed in England during World War II, Marciano and a fellow soldier robbed two Englishmen, beating them up in the process. They were court-martialed and convicted, after which Marciano was dishonorably discharged from

the Army and sentenced to three years in prison. He was released after 22 months and then allowed to rejoin the military for the duration of 1946 in order to receive an honorable discharge.

SONNY LISTON: Liston's résumé before he began boxing professionally included incarceration for a long string of violent offenses, including armed robbery (28 months in prison) and assaulting a police officer (nine months). "Boxing," Jimmy Cannon later wrote, "gave Liston the opportunity to meet big-time hoodlums instead of small ones."

MICHAEL DOKES: After serving two years of probation following a plea bargain on charges of cocaine trafficking. Dokes spent eight years in prison subsequent to pleading guilty in 2000 to charges of attempted murder, kidnapping and battery with intent to commit sexual assault on his girlfriend. Her injuries were so severe that, according to the police, the victim could not be identified from her driver's license photograph.

TREVOR BERBICK: Berbick spent 15 months in prison in Florida after being convicted in 1992 of raping a woman who had worked as a babysitter for his family. At the time of the crime, he was on probation for assaulting a former business manager.

MIKE TYSON: Tyson spent three years in prison (March 26, 1992-March 25, 1995) in Indiana after being convicted of rape and deviate sexual conduct. In 1999, he returned to prison – this time in Maryland – for 108 days after assaulting two motorists following a minor traffic accident.

RIDDICK BOWE: Bowe was convicted in 1998 of kidnapping his estranged wife and children at knifepoint in the belief that it would lead to a marital reconciliation. Pursuant to a plea bargain, he served 17 months in prison.

And one who was saved by Lady Justice . . .

In 1967, Muhammad Ali was convicted of refusing induction into the United States Armed Forces and sentenced to five years in prison. Ultimately, his conviction was overturned by the United States Supreme Court. But while Ali's appeal was pending, he was sentenced to 10 days incarceration in Dade County, Florida, for driving without a valid license.

"Jail is a bad place," Ali said years later. "I was there for about a week until they let us out for Christmas, and it was terrible. You're all locked up. You can't get out. The food is bad and there's nothing good to do. You look out the window at cars and people, and everyone else seems so free. Little things you take for granted like sleeping good or walking down the street, you can't do them no more. A man's got to be real serious about what he believes to say he'll do that for five years, but I was ready if I had to go."

★★★

Manny Pacquiao's victory over Keith Thurman at age 40 has raised the question: Why are so many old fighters successful today?

Boxing has traditionally been a young man's sport. Archie Moore defied expectations in the late 1950s and early '60s by competing into his forties at a high level. Twenty-four years ago, George Foreman captured lightning in a bottle against Michael Moorer at age 45. But Rocky Marciano retired at age 32. And other ring greats were long past their prime at that age.

In other sports, the stars are getting younger. In boxing, the contrary is true. Look at the success enjoyed in recent years by Bernard Hopkins and the Klitschkos. Look at today's elite fighters. Vasiliy Lomachenko, Terence Crawford, Gennadiy Golovkin, Aleksandr Usyk, Mikey Garcia, Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury are all in their thirties.

"I'll tell you why it's happening," veteran trainer Don Turner says. "For starters, young fighters aren't being taught the right way. In every other sport, the teaching has gotten better. In boxing, it keeps getting worse, so fighters aren't learning how to fight until they're old, if they ever learn. Number two, doctors can do things now for injuries and other things that used to end a fighter's career. And the biggest reason is that fighters used to fight 10 or 15 times a year. Now they fight once or twice. You read about guys from the old days who had a hundred fights. Do you know what your body feels like after you've fought a hundred fights?"

★★★

What's it like for a promoter who feels as though he has finally made it to the big time?

Robert Waterman, who promoted fight cards in the United Kingdom and a half dozen other countries from 1997 to 2012, recalls, "My breakthrough fight was a cruiserweight championship bout on EuroSport. I was standing in the ring before the fight, feeling quite pleased with myself, when my cell phone rang. The fighters weren't in the ring yet, so I answered it. And the first thing I heard was my mother's voice saying, 'Tuck your shirt in. You look like a slob.'" RING

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing – has just been published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

THE FACE OF BOXING

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK**

TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

THREE WOMEN

Women's boxing has a long way to go in terms of marketability and the skill level of its practitioners before it catches up to its counterparts in sports like tennis, basketball and soccer. But the three women pictured here are doing their part.

Claressa Shields (left page), Katie Taylor (below, left) and Cecilia Braekhus (below, right) are undefeated in the professional ranks. Each is a unified champion.

Shields won back-to-back gold medals as a middleweight representing the United States at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. Taylor is one of Ireland's most popular athletes, having won Olympic gold at the 2012 Olympics. Braekhus, a Norwegian national born in Colombia, never fought in the Olympics. But she has been dominant at 147 pounds for much of her 12-year professional career.

"I'd photographed many women before, but never a woman fighter," Wojtek Urbanek says. "So when I got into boxing, this was different for me.

"Claressa presented herself with dignity. I felt as though I was photographing a royal. And there was something timeless in her look.

"Katie has an honesty and purity about her. In some ways, she seems like an innocent in a sinful world.

"With Cecilia, it was a funny situation. She came to where I was photographing. Then she saw the lights and the rest of the setup, said, 'Wait a minute' and disappeared into the ladies' room for 10 minutes to fix her hair and makeup. But in front of the camera, she had the look of a fighter."

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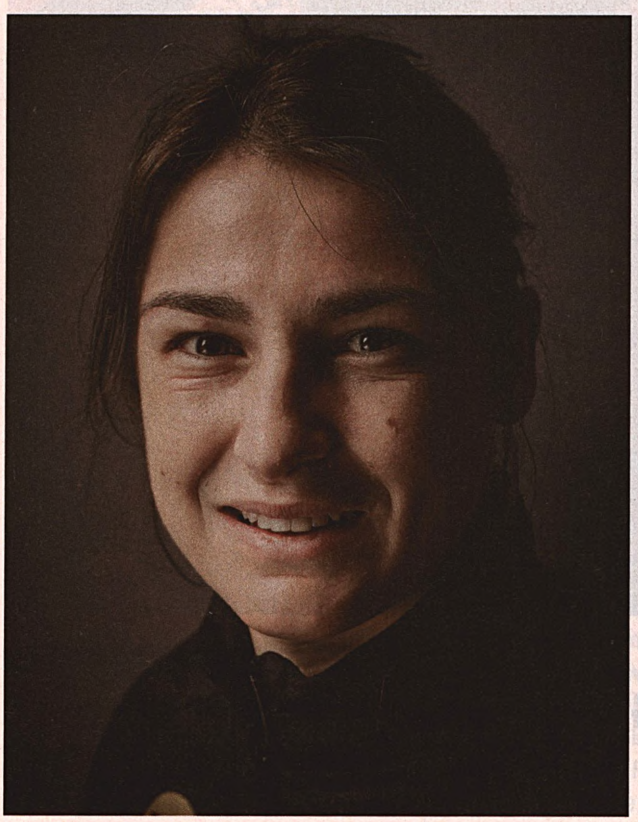


RATINGS SUMMARY

THE RING RATINGS THROUGH FIGHTS OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2019

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS

BY **BRIAN HARTY**

Luke Campbell (right) managed to take Vasiliy Lomachenko the distance, but the champion defended his Ring Magazine lightweight title with a wide unanimous decision.

POUND FOR POUND

The P4P list looks the same as it did last month, but a couple of its members were on the job recently. In his first fight after defeating Srisaket Sor Rungvisai for the Ring and WBC junior bantamweight belts in April, Juan Francisco Estrada (No. 8) got his victory lap, performing for his hometown fans in Hermosillo, Mexico, for the first time since 2014. His opponent was North Carolina native Dewayne Beamon, who had just gained some not-so-relevant experience from splitting a pair of eight-rounders with Mexican journeyman Martin Tecuapetla. Still, Beamon was amped up with plenty of muscle – heart included – and his enthusiastic attacks found Estrada's face more than a few times.

But Estrada's spot on this list was a long time coming and he showed why – staying calm in the center of the American's bombardments and taking one slip and counter at a time, stabbing through shifting pockets of airspace and getting mean to create his own when required. Beamon's passion kept him on his feet (except for a couple knockdowns in Round 2), but he could've had another pair of arms and still been unable to protect himself from the all-angled power punches targeting his flesh. By the ninth, he'd been broken down and the referee mercifully stepped in. This was also Estrada's first fight as a member of the Matchroom stable, which houses WBA titleholder Khalid Yafai as well, so a unification could come soon.

No. 1-rated Vasiliy Lomachenko was in London for his fight against the lanky Luke Campbell, who used his reach and under-considered boxing skills to create an area of frustration between himself and the lightweight champion. As is always the case, though, Lomachenko's talents unrolled like a scroll and he found ways to adjust, eventually adding an 11th-round knockdown highlight to his wide unanimous decision victory.

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Tyson Fury vs. Otto Wallin is well-chronicled elsewhere in this issue, but just one thing to add, because yelling at the TV clearly doesn't work and maybe he'll read it here: Tyson, stop touching the cut! The fight result had no effect on the ratings, though.

Tyson Fury survived horrific facial cuts and a spirited challenge from Otto Wallin, whom he outpointed to retain his No. 1 heavyweight ranking.

Neither did No. 7-rated Alexander Povetkin's unanimous decision over Tyson's cousin, Hughie (unrated).

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Ilunga Makabu, road warrior to the core (his last 15 fights have been in nine different countries), and previously undefeated Russian Aleksei Papin provided 12 crowd-pleasing rounds in the latter's home country, with Makabu getting a razor-close majority decision win. Papin planted his feet and did some solid work with left hooks and a versatile right cross to counteract Makabu's forward-plodding uppercuts, but a knockdown in Round 12 gave the African the points he needed. Fun stuff from Makabu, who rose from No. 6 to No. 5, and the unrated Papin, who gave a great account of himself in just his 12th pro fight.

Kevin Lerena (No. 5 last month) lost a rank due to Makabu's win and stayed put at No. 6 after stopping Sefer Seferi (unrated) in three rounds. The general feeling on the ratings panel was that Lerena needs to face a better opponent to move up.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

You can ask whether Sergey Kovalev is too far over the hill to handle the peak-level skills and power of Canelo Alvarez all you want, but his jab vs. anyone's face is still like a runaway city bus vs. a parked car. Previously undefeated Anthony Yarde

Jaime Munguia held onto his No. 4 spot in the junior middleweight rankings with a fourth-round stoppage of Patrick Allotey in defense of his WBO title.

(unrated) put up a great fight – probably even could've stopped the defending WBO titleholder had the eighth round been four minutes long – but the Russian came back hard in the 10th round and floored the Brit with that heavy left in the 11th. Kovalev held his rank at No. 2, which is where he'll be when he welcomes the diminutive redhead from Mexico to the division in November.

Among those outside the ratings, unbeaten Joshua Buatsi ("the best 175-pound up-and-comer," according to one panelist) buzzed Ryan Ford with a left hook, then finished him with a right to the body and a left to the "lower body" in Round 3.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

None of the ranked 168-pounders were in action, but prospect Vladimir Shishkin garnered compliments for his untaxing eighth-round stoppage of DeAndre Ware on ShoBox, though the undefeated Russian's speed didn't exactly set the canvas on fire. Alfredo Angulo's split-decision victory over Peter Quillin didn't throw the boxing world off its axis either, as both men are layoff-prone past-primers in their late 30s, but it was a far-from-upsetting 10 rounds of very good action from two of boxing's former stars. Angulo, who is now training with Abel Sanchez, hopes the win will get him into consideration for a shot at a belt (surprisingly, with all the big names he has faced, "El Perro" has never fought for a world title).

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

After more than four years out of the ring, James Kirkland returned to action (sadly, still without Ann Wolfe in his corner) with a first-round stoppage of Colby Courter. "Difficult to see him being able to make too much of an impression at the highest level, but we shall see," said one member of the panel. In Australia, Michael Zerafa (unrated) probably ended Pacquiao-upsetter Jeff Horn's hopes of middleweight conquest with a ninth-round TKO.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Erislandy Lara (No. 3) never got the chance to avenge his loss to Canelo Alvarez in 2014, but he did get the chance to beat the hell out of Canelo's older brother Ramon on August 31 in Minnesota. Alvarez, despite coming in more than four pounds overweight, was nearly sent through the ropes in the second round by a series of left crosses and was then finished by a hail of punches in the follow-up from the Cuban.

Jaime Munguia remained at No. 4 with an easy defense of his title against unrated Patrick Allotey, whom he stopped in Round 4. Munguia's ability to make 154 pounds was questioned by the panel, however, as was his ability to handle a boxer like the man who sits directly above him on the list. Read: Might be time to move up and try your luck on a full stomach.

On the fringes, Liam Smith, who gave up his belt to Munguia via unanimous decision in 2018, continued his comeback with a seventh-round stoppage of Mario Lozano (unrated).

WELTERWEIGHTS

Flashy Philadelphian Jaron Ennis (unrated) remained undefeated after a one-round walk in the park with Bolivia's Franklin Mamani. Not much new information was gained from the 10-rounder, and one panelist offered, "I am not as high on Jaron Ennis as others, but the division is very deep, so he will have plenty of chances to prove me wrong."

Thomas Dulorme didn't get into the ratings by ruining Terrel Williams' perfect record with a comfortable 10-round decision in California, but the onetime title challenger officially earned his gatekeeper badge with the win and possibly edged closer to a bigger opportunity.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Jose Zepeda got into the ratings at No. 9, pushing out No. 10-rated Eduard Troyanovsky with an efficient UD over Jose Pedraza, who was venturing above lightweight for the first time. Zepeda said afterward that he'd be happy to get a rematch with fellow Californian Jose Ramirez (No. 3), who probably got the toughest test of his career but held onto his title by majority decision when they met in February.

Among the unrated, Brooklyn-based Uzbekistani Shakhram Giyasov advanced toward the gate with a first-round stoppage of former WBA lightweight titleholder Darleys Perez. Now at 25-0, Jeremias Ponce fought outside his native Argentina for just the second time and beat Rico Mueller by majority decision in Germany. And California son Brandun Lee, making his TV debut on ShoBox with a record of 16-0 (14 KOs), was impressive with a second-round knockout of Milton Arauz.

Devin Haney advanced to No. 2 in the lightweight rankings, displacing Luke Campbell, following his fourth-round stoppage of Zaur Abdullaev.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

There was nowhere for Lomachenko to go, he being the division champion, and Campbell only slipped from No. 2 to No. 4 – credit for the strength of his performance and a little extra as sympathy for his assignment.

The No. 2 spot was taken by Devin Haney (No. 4 last month), who drew high praise for dispatching unrated Zaur Abdullaev with four rounds of whip-quick offense. Some panelists believe Haney won't stop there: "I think he should be No. 1 but still needs to beat a higher level of foe before getting that nod," said one. "The kid looks special."

With former titleholder Pedraza (No. 3 last month) heading north into oblivion, a spot opened up at No. 10. Rances Barthelemy's name was put forward but didn't rouse much enthusiasm. "Grim division after the top seven or eight guys," as one panelist summed it up. Still, nobody could think of anyone better, so Barthelemy got the nod.

Jorge Linares and Masayuki Ito both notched victories in comeback fights – the former just above 135 and the latter in his first since leaving 130 – so those guys will probably be on the list soon with better opponents. For the time being, Ito held his No. 7 rating at junior lightweight.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Joseph Diaz Jr. and Miguel Roman held their spots at Nos. 6 and 7, respectively, after a pair of unnoteworthy wins – Diaz a majority decision over Jesus Cuadro and Roman a UD over Tomas Rojas. More notice was given to unrated and undefeated New Yorker Chris Colbert, who stopped Miguel Beltran in one round.

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Two guys "in the 11-15 range" got on this month's radar – Mark Magsayo with a unanimous decision over Pungluang Sor Singyu and Ruben Villa with the same over Jose Vivas – but both will need more of a challenge to break out.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Less than a month after his last title defense (look out, Henry Armstrong!), Emanuel Navarrete stopped Juan Miguel Elorde, whose famous surname did his health no favors by getting him into the ring with the power-punching Mexican. Elorde put up the pretense of being the aggressor but was completely overmatched in every way, and his team needlessly sent him out for a fourth round that was waved off after the first solid punch landed. Navarrete held his spot at No. 3.

22-year-old "Heartbreaker" Brandon Figueroa closed the show in four rounds with some vicious assaults on former title challenger Javier Chacon (unrated and

ANTHONY GEATHERS

Juan Francisco Estrada defended his Ring Magazine and WBC junior bantamweight titles with a ninth-round TKO of Dewayne Beamon.

38 years old). One panelist questioned whether the win merited a promotion, but Figueroa gained a spot, from No. 8 to No. 7. Previously unrated Azat Hovhannisyan's fourth-round knockout of Franklin Manzanilla (unrated) was also questioned as a worthy entry point, but he took the No. 10 spot from Shingo Wake based on superior activity and resume.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

John Riel Casimero's 10th-round stoppage of Cesar Ramirez, detailed in this month's "World Beat" section, was good enough to get him into the No. 10 spot, replacing Joshua Franco. Carlos Cuadras held his position at No. 8 after edging Jose Maria Cardenas by majority decision – probably should've been easier for Cuadras than that.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Estrada is the champion and Beamon wasn't rated, so no change there. On a side note, Roman Gonzalez (No. 6) passed a year of inactivity and thus became eligible for removal, but the word is he'll be returning soon, so we'll be monitoring that situation closely.

FLYWEIGHTS

No. 1-rated Kosei Tanaka retained his WBO title with a seventh-round TKO of Jonathan Gonzalez (unrated), who bravely rose after three knockdowns in the final round – no effect on the ratings. The win did trigger, however, the question of considering Tanaka, who is now dominating at 112 pounds the same way he did at 108 and 105, for the pound-for-pound list. Not yet, but he's close, was the consensus. "Good fighter, but I'd like to see him reach for that brass ring and take a fight that's at least 50-50, like Moruti Mthalane," said one panelist.

Also, Cristofer Rosales held his position at No. 7 after stopping Eliecer Quezada (unrated) in seven rounds – Rosales' first fight after losing his WBC title to Charlie Edwards – and Andrew Selby remained at No. 6 after a first-round knockout of Worawatchai Boonjan (unrated).

That aforementioned title remained in Edwards' possession after his fight against Julio Cesar Martinez, initially ruled a knockout loss for the Brit, was switched to a no-contest. Martinez was landing blow after unanswered blow in Round 3, just hammering Edwards, who eventually dropped to his knee and appeared to be in dire trouble. Then Martinez decided (or at least couldn't NOT decide) to hit the fallen Edwards with a left hook that he had to stoop to throw – it was so late that it was not much different from walking up to someone sitting on a park bench and punching them in the liver. And somehow referee Mark Lyson still counted Edwards out. Next thing you know, WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman, after watching a replay with British Boxing Board of Control Chairman Charles Giles, is in the ring and the result is being overruled. It was unorthodox, to say the least, and immediately reignited the ongoing debate about using instant replay in boxing. The crazy thing is how unnecessary the punch was. Anyway, Edwards stayed at No. 5 and Martinez stayed at No. 4.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS

An eventful month for those in the "40 percent of Tyson Fury" division: Puerto Rico got back into the titleholder club with unrated Wilfredo Mendez's upset UD over Vic Saludar (No. 3 last month) to win the WBO belt in what was Saludar's second defense, Byron Rojas (No. 4 last month) outpointed unrated Eliezer Gazo in an eight-rounder and Pedro Taduran (unrated) rose from a first-round knockdown to stop No. 9-rated Samuel Salva in four for the vacant IBF title. As a result of all that, Mendez entered at No. 3, Saludar was knocked down to No. 7, Salva dropped out and Taduran came in at No. 9.

RATINGS

THE RING RATINGS THROUGH FIGHTS OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2019

Vasiliy Lomachenko's perch atop the pound-for-pound ratings was secure after outboxing and dropping British challenger Luke Campbell in London.

1 VASILIY LOMACHENKO
Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

2 TERENCE CRAWFORD
U.S. • 35-0-0 (26 KOs)

3 CANELO ALVAREZ
Mexico • 52-1-2 (35 KOs)

4 NAOYA INOUE
Japan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)

5 ALEKSANDR USYK
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

6 ERROL SPENCE JR.
U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 GENNADIY GOLOVKIN
Kazakhstan • 39-1-1 (35 KOs)

8 JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

9 MIKEY GARCIA
U.S. • 39-1-0 (30 KOs)

10 MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C (VACANT)

1 TYSON FURY
U.K. • 29-0-1 (20 KOs)

2 DEONTAY WILDER
U.S. • 41-0-1 (40 KOs)

3 ANDY RUIZ JR.
U.S. • 33-1-0 (22 KOs)

4 ANTHONY JOSHUA
U.K. • 22-1-0 (21 KOs)

5 DILLIAN WHYTE
U.K. • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

6 LUIS ORTIZ
Cuba • 31-1-0 (26 KOs)

7 ALEXANDER POVETKIN
Russia • 35-2-0 (24 KOs)

8 JOSEPH PARKER
New Zealand • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)

9 ADAM KOWNACKI
U.S. • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 KUBRAT PULEV
Bulgaria • 27-1-0 (14 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C ALEKSANDR USYK
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

1 MAIRIS BRIEDIS
Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

2 MURAT GASSIEV
Russia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

3 YUNIER DORTICOS
Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)

4 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 ILUNGA MAKABU
Congo • 26-2-0 (24 KOs)

6 KEVIN LERENA
S. Africa • 24-1-0 (11 KOs)

7 ANDREW TABITI
U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

8 ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN
France • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

9 LAWRENCE OKOLIE
U.K. • 13-0-0 (10 KOs)

10 YVES NGABU
Belgium • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)

2 SERGEY KOVALEV
Russia • 34-3-1 (29 KOs)

3 DMITRY BIVOL
Russia • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 ARTUR BETERBIEV
Russia • 14-0-0 (14 KOs)

5 ELEIDER ALVAREZ
Colombia • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 BADOU JACK
Sweden • 22-2-3 (13 KOs)

7 JEAN PASCAL
Canada • 34-6-1 (20 KOs)

8 JESSE HART
U.S. • 26-2-0 (21 KOs)

9 MARCUS BROWNE
U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

10 SULLIVAN BARRERA
Cuba • 22-3-0 (14 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C CALLUM SMITH
U.K. • 26-0-0 (19 KOs)

1 GILBERTO RAMIREZ
Mexico • 40-0-0 (26 KOs)

2 DAVID BENAVIDEZ
U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

3 CALEB PLANT
U.S. • 19-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 ANTHONY DIRRELL
U.S. • 33-1-1 (24 KOs)

5 CANELO ALVAREZ
Mexico • 52-1-2 (35 KOs)

6 CHRIS EUBANK JR.
U.K. • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

7 JOSE UZCATEGUI
Venezuela • 28-3-0 (23 KOs)

8 CALEB TRUAX
U.S. • 30-4-2 (19 KOs)

9 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
U.K. • 28-0-0 (13 KOs)

10 AVNI YILDIRIM
Turkey • 21-2-0 (12 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of September 21, 2019

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C CANELO ALVAREZ** Mexico • 52-1-2 (35 KOs)
- **1 GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** Kaz. • 39-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **2 DANIEL JACOBS** U.S. • 35-3-0 (29 KOs)
- **3 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** U.S. • 28-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **4 JERMALL CHARLO** U.S. • 29-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **5 RYOTA MURATA** Japan • 15-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **6 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** Ukraine • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **7 DAVID LEMIEUX** Canada • 40-4-0 (34 KOs)
- **8 KAMIL SZEREMETA** Poland • 20-0-0 (4 KOs)
- **9 MACIEJ SULECKI** Poland • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **10 ROB BRANT** U.S. • 25-2-0 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 JULIAN WILLIAMS** U.S. • 27-1-1 (16 KOs)
- **2 JARRETT HURD** U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **3 ERISLANDY LARA** Cuba • 26-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **4 JAIME MUNGUIA** Mexico • 34-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **5 BRIAN CASTANO** Argentina • 15-0-1 (11 KOs)
- **6 TONY HARRISON** U.S. • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7 JERMELL CHARLO** U.S. • 32-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **8 MICHEL SORO** France • 34-2-1 (23 KOs)
- **9 ERICKSON LUBIN** U.S. • 21-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **10 KELL BROOK** U.K. • 38-2-0 (26 KOs)

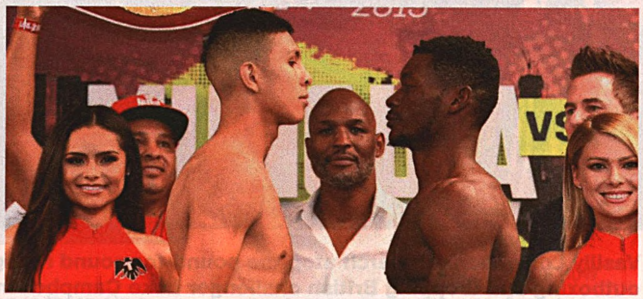
WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ERROL SPENCE JR.** U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2 TERENCE CRAWFORD** U.S. • 35-0-0 (26 KOs)
- **3 MANNY PACQUIAO** Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4 KEITH THURMAN** U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5 SHAWN PORTER** U.S. • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)
- **6 DANNY GARCIA** U.S. • 35-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7 YORDENIS UGAS** Cuba • 24-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **8 EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS** Lithuania • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **9 SERGEY LIPINETS** Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10 KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV** Uzbekistan • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 REGIS PROGRAIS** U.S. • 24-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **2 JOSH TAYLOR** U.K. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3 JOSE RAMIREZ** U.S. • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **4 IVAN BARANCHYK** Russia • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5 VIKTOR POSTOL** Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **6 KIRYL RELIKH** Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **7 MAURICE HOOKER** U.S. • 26-1-3 (17 KOs)
- **8 SUBRIEL MATIAS** Puerto Rico • 14-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **9 JOSE ZEPEDA** U.S. • 31-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **10 YVES ULYSSE** Canada • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)

Erislandy Lara demolished an overweight and overmatched Ramon Alvarez, knocking him out in Round 2 in Minnesota.



Jaime Munguia had little trouble with junior middleweight challenger Patrick Allotey, but the growing Mexican's days at 154 pounds might be numbered.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C VASILIY LOMACHENKO** Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1 RICHARD COMMEY** Ghana • 29-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **2 DEVIN HANEY** U.S. • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3 TEOFIMO LOPEZ** U.S. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **4 LUKE CAMPBELL** U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5 ROBERT EASTER** U.S. • 21-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **6 JAVIER FORTUNA** Dom. Rep. • 34-2-1 (23 KOs)
- **7 EMMANUEL TAGOE** Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **8 ANTHONY CROLLA** U.K. • 34-7-3 (13 KOs)
- **9 RYAN GARCIA** U.S. • 18-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **10 RANCES BARTHELEMY** Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 MIGUEL BERCHELT** Mexico • 36-1-0 (32 KOs)
- **2 GERVONTA DAVIS** U.S. • 22-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **3 TEVIN FARMER** U.S. • 30-4-1 (6 KOs)
- **4 ANDREW CANCIO** U.S. • 21-4-2 (16 KOs)
- **5 JAMEL HERRING** U.S. • 20-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **6 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** U.S. • 30-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **7 MASAYUKI ITO** Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **8 MIGUEL ROMAN** Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **9 FRANCISCO VARGAS** Mexico • 25-2-2 (18 KOs)
- **10 RENE ALVARADO** Nicaragua • 31-8-0 (20 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 LEO SANTA CRUZ** U.S. • 36-1-1 (19 KOs)
- **2 JOSH WARRINGTON** U.K. • 29-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **3 GARY RUSSELL JR.** U.S. • 30-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **4 OSCAR VALDEZ** Mexico • 26-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **5 CARL FRAMPTON** U.K. • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **6 XU CAN** China • 17-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **7 SHAKUR STEVENSON** U.S. • 12-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **8 TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR** Mongolia • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9 KID GALAHAD** U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **10 JOET GONZALEZ** U.S. • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 DANIEL ROMAN** U.S. • 27-2-1 (10 KOs)
- **2 REY VARGAS** Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **3 EMANUEL NAVARRETE** Mexico • 29-1-0 (25 KOs)
- **4 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** Cuba • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **5 TJ DOHENY** Australia • 21-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6 RYOSUKE IWASA** Japan • 26-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **7 BRANDON FIGUEROA** U.S. • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **8 TOMOKI KAMEDA** Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **9 ISAAC DOGBOE** Ghana • 20-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **10 AZAT HOVHANNISYAN** Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)

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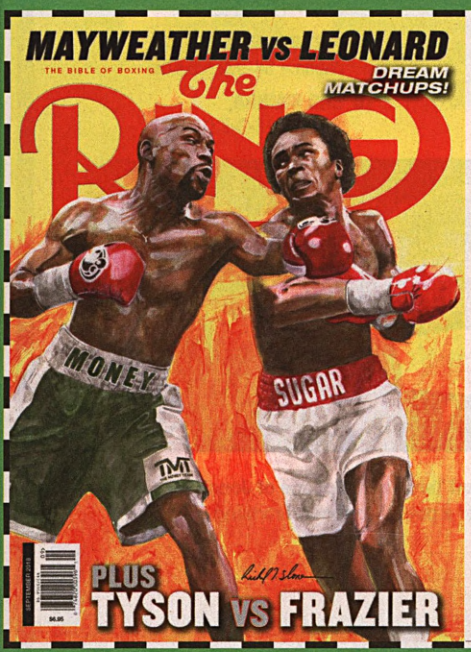

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RATINGS

Through fights of September 21, 2019

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C NAOYA INOUE
Japan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)

1 LUIS NERY
Mexico • 30-0-0 (24 KOs)

2 ZOLANI TETE
S. Africa • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)

3 NONITO DONAIRE
Phil. • 40-5-0 (26 KOs)

4 NORDINE OUBAALI
France • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

5 EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ
P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 JASON MOLONEY
Australia • 19-1-0 (16 KOs)

7 TAKUMA INOUE
Japan • 13-0-0 (3 KOs)

8 CARLOS CUADRAS
Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)

9 JOSHUA GREER
U.S. • 21-1-1 (12 KOs)

10 JOHN RIEL CASIMERO
Philippines • 28-4–0 (19 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

1 SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI
Thailand • 47-5-1 (41 KOs)

2 DONNIE NIETES
Phil. • 42-1-5 (23 KOs)

3 KAZUTO IOKA
Japan • 24-2-0 (14 KOs)

4 KHALID YAFAI
U.K. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)

5 JERWIN ANCAJAS
Phil. • 31-1-2 (21 KOs)

6 ROMAN GONZALEZ
Nicaragua • 47-2-0 (39 KOs)

7 ANDREW MOLONEY
Australia • 20-0-0 (13 KOs)

8 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.
Mexico • 31-4-1 (22 KOs)

9 JEYVIER CINTRON
P.R. • 11-0-0 (5 KOs)

10 ALEJANDRO BARRIOS
Mexico • 20-2-5 (10 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 KOSEI TANAKA
Japan • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)

2 MORUTI MTHALANE
S. Africa • 38-2-0 (25 KOs)

3 ARTEM DALAKIAN
Ukraine • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)

4 JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ
Mexico • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)

5 CHARLIE EDWARDS
U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)

6 ANDREW SELBY
U.K. • 12-1-0 (7 KOs)

7 CRISTOFER ROSALES
Nicaragua • 29-4-0 (20 KOs)

8 MASAYUKI KURODA
Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)

9 RYOICHI TAGUCHI
Japan • 27-4-2 (12 KOs)

10 JUNTO NAKATANI
Japan • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

C HIROTO KYOGUCHI
Japan • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)

1 KEN SHIRO
Japan • 16-0-0 (9 KOs)

2 HEKKIE BUDLER
S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)

3 CARLOS CANIZALES
Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)

4 FELIX ALVARADO
Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)

5 ELWIN SOTO
Mexico • 15-1-0 (11 KOs)

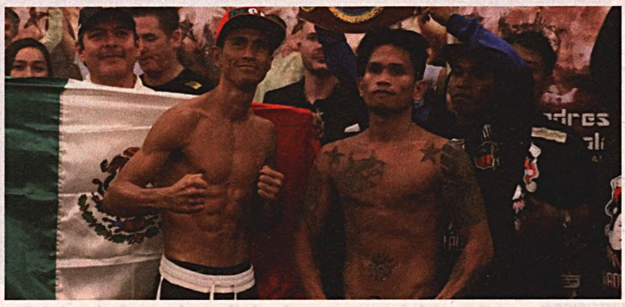
6 ANGEL ACOSTA
P.R. • 20-2-0 (20 KOs)

7 MILAN MELINDO
Phil. • 37-4-0 (13 KOs)

8 EDWARD HENO
Phil. • 14-0-5 (5 KOs)

9 TETSUYA HISADA
Japan • 34-9-2 (20 KOs)

10 SHO KIMURA
Japan • 18-3-2 (11 KOs)



John Riel Casimero (right) cracked the bantamweight rankings with a 10th-round knockout of Cesar Ramirez.

Flyweight titleholder Kosei Tanaka's stoppage of Jonathan Gonzalez triggered talk of a pound-for-pound ranking.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C (VACANT)

1 KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART
Thailand • 20-0-0 (7 KOs)

2 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN
Thailand • 53-0-0 (18 KOs)

3 WILFREDO MENDEZ
Puerto Rico • 14-1-0 (5 KOs)

4 BYRON ROJAS
Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)

5 SIMPIWE KONKCO
S. Africa • 19-5-0 (7 KOs)

6 DEEJAY KRIEL
S. Africa • 15-1-1 (7 KOs)

7 VIC SALUDAR
Phil. • 19-4-0 (10 KOs)

8 JOSE ARGUMEDO
Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)

9 PEDRO TADURAN
Phil. • 14-2-0 (11 KOs)

10 CARLOS LICONA
U.S. • 15-1-0 (2 KOs)

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A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

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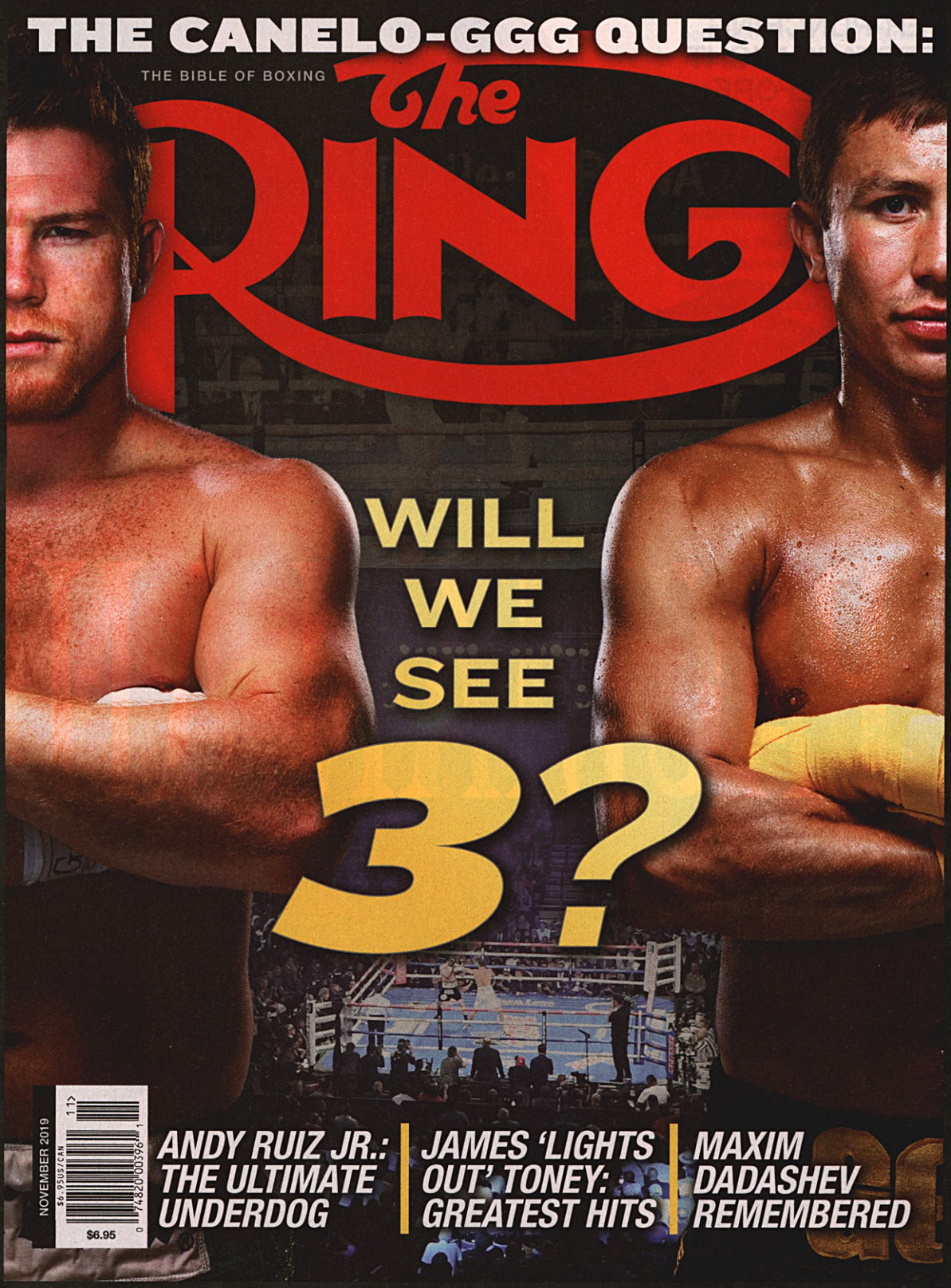

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GET TO RINGSIDE EARLY FOR THIS FANTASY MATCHUP, OR ONE OF THESE POWER-PUNCHING SUPERSTARS MIGHT SIT DOWN BEFORE YOU DO

By **Tom Gray**

PACMAN AND THE PRINCE

In many ways, it's a near-perfect prizefight. Manny Pacquiao vs. Prince Naseem Hamed could have been one of the most significant and anticipated featherweight showdowns in the history of the sport had the Filipino hero emerged a few years earlier or the British superstar stuck around a little longer.

Naseem Hamed and Manny Pacquiao were the most dynamically talented featherweights of their respective decades.

PACMAN AND THE PRINCE

Hamed lost to Marco Antonio Barrera two months before Pacquiao introduced himself to American fans by brutally dispatching Lehlo Ledwaba on an Oscar De La Hoya undercard in 2001. "The Prince" only fought one more time, in 2002, leaving hardcore fans to wonder what would have happened if he'd clashed with Pacquiao, who later emerged as an elite-level featherweight.

The fight will never be more than a dream, but the appeal is obvious. It matches two charismatic and engaging personalities who evolved into transcendent boxing superstars. Two of the most exciting television fighters of the past 25 years. Two authentic knockout artists with more than a degree of vulnerability themselves. However, despite everything they have in common, Pacquiao and Hamed are different in so many ways.

The electrifying Hamed, who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2015, stepped away from boxing at the age of 28 years old. In a glittering 10-year professional career, the Sheffield, England, native collected three world title belts at featherweight and amassed a career record of 36-1 (31 knockouts). Notable victories came against Steve Robinson, Manuel Medina, Tom Johnson, Kevin Kelley, Wilfredo Vazquez, Cesar Soto and Vuyani Bungu. Hamed is also the first fighter ever to retroactively receive a Ring Magazine championship belt.

When Pacquiao turned 28 years old in December 2006, he was a three-weight world titleholder. The Filipino icon was coming off his second stoppage victory over Mexican legend Erik Morales and was already a surefire lock for the Hall of Fame. But the amazing thing is that he was just getting started. Since that time, Pacquiao has claimed recognized governing body titles or Ring Magazine championships in five more weight classes. Still active, he currently holds the record for most divisions conquered (eight) and – at 40 years of age – is the reigning WBA welterweight titleholder. Notable victories? We don't have enough space to list them – the senator's record is insane.

However, even though Pacquiao has been a professional for almost a quarter of a century, like every other great champion, he did have a peak. Today's veteran version is still good enough to deal with most top-level welterweights, but there are many who believe that Pacquiao's best form came at the lower weights. In November 2003, the rapid-fire southpaw tore through the great Barrera to claim the Ring and lineal featherweight championships via 11th-round stoppage. Pacquiao was absolutely dazzling in one of the standout performances of the decade.

Conversely, the Hamed who faced Barrera in his penultimate fight was nowhere near his best when he dropped a unanimous decision to "The Baby-Faced Assassin" in April 2001. For a dream match with Pacquiao, we would require a fully functional, fully loaded, fully motivated version of "The Prince"

Pacquiao's Fighter of the Decade run began with his 2001 stoppage of Lehlo Ledwaba.

from 1997. In that year alone, the switch-hitting Hamed won five world title bouts, all by knockout inside eight rounds, and unified two 126-pound titles along the way. You want vintage Naz? This is as good as it gets.

So who wins?

Two of the best boxing minds in the game have very different outlooks on "Pacman" and "The Prince" and what would have happened had they thrown down in their respective primes. In fact, for the most part, their opinions are every bit as contrasting as the styles and personalities of our dream match participants. To add to the intrigue, both of our experts backed up their arguments with solid evidence.

"Naz would use his body almost like a contortionist, then he would clock you with a shot when you had no idea he could throw from that angle," offered former two-weight world titleholder and boxing analyst Paulie Malignaggi in relation to Hamed's explosive counterpunching style. "That wasn't spur of the moment; he trained that way, and his major influence was (trainer) Brendan Ingle. Naz was the perfect pupil for that style in the same way that Cus D'Amato had several successful fighters, but (Mike) Tyson was the perfect pupil for his style.

"Pacquiao's defense was always a bit lacking, and he took punches. Even early in his career, he was taken out by big shots. The thing that makes him fun to watch is the fact that he's so offensive-minded, but that's what makes him available to be hurt. Naz had a knack for using the angle that you'd least expect, so if Pacquiao is walking into shots from angles you do expect, just imagine what a guy like Naz could do from angles that you don't expect."

"Pacquiao's defense is not as bad as people make it out to be; he's actually very clever defensively," countered esteemed trainer Stephen "Breadman" Edwards, who works with unified

junior middleweight titleholder Julian Williams. "If Pacquiao wasn't good defensively, then he wouldn't be able to beat these welterweights when he's undersized and not scoring knockouts.

"When he's at his best, Pacquiao blocks punches good, he leans off punches good, so his defense has definitely evolved over the years. At featherweight, he didn't rely on it as much, because he had a physicality advantage over his opponents. His defense is still pretty good. In fact, I'd say his defense is better than Naseem Hamed's."

So, opinions couldn't be more different when it comes to defense, but both of our experts were on the same page when it comes to the power of these fighters. Hamed had an overall knockout ratio of 84 percent, and when Pacquiao left the featherweight ranks behind, his record was 39-2 (30 KOs), which gives him a stoppage ratio of 77 percent.

"Naz is very high on the list (of greatest featherweight punchers)," opined Edwards. "In fact, him and Pacquiao are two of the biggest punchers ever at 126, along with (Sandy) Saddler, (Alexis) Arguello, Danny "Little Red" Lopez, Azumah Nelson and (Juan Manuel) Marquez. Those guys could punch, but Naz was a huge puncher and he only lost once in his entire career. There were times when fighters were getting to him, but he'd just walk them onto a counter shot and change the fight around."

"Pacquiao is a powerful puncher, but you have to rate Hamed as one of the hardest punchers ever in the featherweight division," Malignaggi said. "There are guys who get knockouts and guys who get stoppages. Hamed got knockouts; he was creaming people and they were sleeping. They were hit with something and they didn't know what was happening.

"Kevin Kelley was able to deck Hamed but left himself exposed to the dynamite. I was at that fight and I remember thinking, 'Kevin keeps dropping him, but except for one knockdown, they were balance shots.' Whenever Kevin went down, you could see those were real knockdowns, and you could almost sense the sand was running out of his hourglass. Hamed was getting straight back up, but Kelley needed more time to recover, and that played a factor in the fight and the result."

Edwards is a boxing historian and is also renowned for having a successful prediction rate when it comes to picking winners in fights. First and foremost, however, he's a world-class trainer who comes to work well-versed on the opposition with concise and structured game plans. If you want proof of that, look no further than Williams' sensational upset victory over Jarrett Hurd in May.

So how would Edwards approach a Pacquiao fight if he happened to be in Hamed's corner?

"If I'm training Naz, I would play the counterpuncher against Pacquiao," he said. "Naz is obviously a good puncher, maybe a better puncher than Pacquiao with one shot, but he's not busy enough and doesn't have a good enough jab to beat him by decision. What he needs to do is run Pacquiao into a shot. I would tell Naz to keep feinting to make Pacquiao lead, because Hamed was an extraordinary counterpuncher. Even in fights where he got himself in trouble, like against Augie Sanchez and Kevin Kelley, he had the tendency to hit people up underneath with counter shots.

"Other than that, it's a really tough fight stylistically. Pacquiao is taller, bigger, rangier and he throws better straight shots. He has an underrated lead hand – a good jab, double jab, step-in jab, left-hand combination. It's a really tough fight … but Naz could clip him. Walking Pacquiao onto a left uppercut or right uppercut is his best chance of winning the fight."

Despite Malignaggi being down on Pacquiao defensively, the former junior welterweight and welterweight titleholder is under no illusion about his overall effectiveness at the lighter weights.

"The things that made Pacquiao special as a featherweight are the same things that make him special now: his punch output and his combinations," acknowledged Malignaggi.

"Pacquiao is always looking to make you uncomfortable, and because he's always looking to engage, his strength is a factor and he's a puncher. He wants a firefight, and most of the time his speed beats you, and that's exactly how he scored wins over Barrera and Morales. They have the Mexican mentality of fighting – all heart, toe-to-toe, machismo – and they won't back down, but Pacquiao was not only powerful, he had the speed behind his attacks."

When Edwards was asked to switch corners and give his game plan if he were training Pacquiao for a Hamed clash, he sounded a lot more confident.

"He's got to double jab him, shoot

Prime Prince: Hamed overwhelmed Said Lawal in 35 seconds in their 1996 featherweight title bout.

the left hand to the body and shoot the left hand to the head," said the Philadelphia-based coach. "Keep stepping forward as Naz tries to lean off. Naz is short and he leans back at the waist to avoid punches, which gets him in trouble. He got knocked down and hit a lot in some fights, but not by anyone like Pacquiao.

"To me, Pacquiao just has to be himself, keep stepping in and shooting straight, hard shots. But he does have to make sure to shoot the left hand to the body and to the head so that Naz doesn't read him. If you headhunt too much with Naz, he'll make you shoot over the top, squat and hit you up underneath with the uppercut. Naz landed a lot of counter shots up underneath and around."

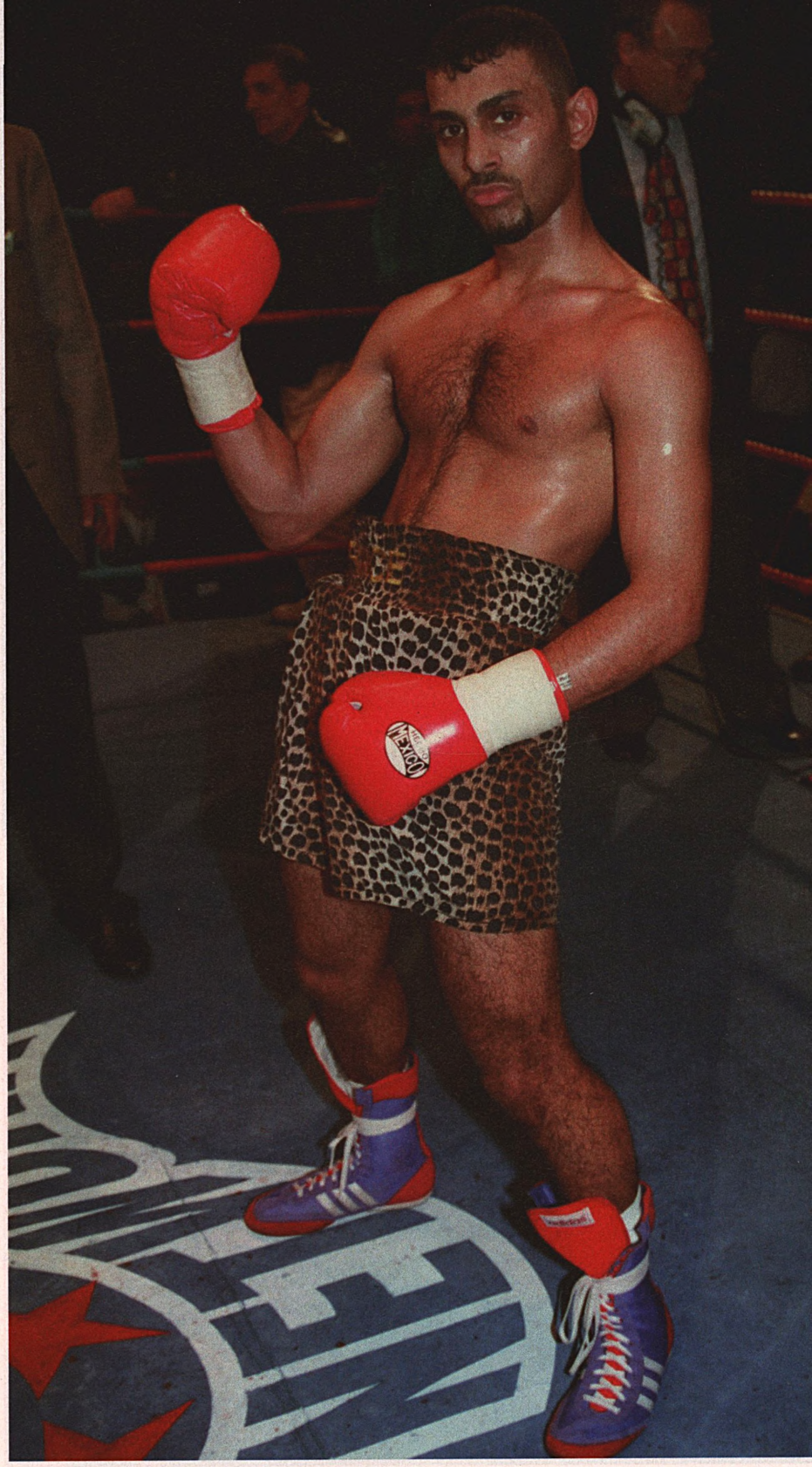
Sports can be very unpredictable, and there's no sport more unpredictable than boxing. What makes this dream fight even more difficult to call is the state-of-the-art firepower that Malignaggi and Edwards have both referenced.

From the very beginning of his professional career, Hamed was cleaning house with an unconventional mix of athleticism and power-punching. Eighteen of his 31 knockouts came inside three rounds, and that's an ominous statistic for any prospective opponent. Also, despite being floored on several occasions, Hamed was never stopped and, furthermore, never seriously hurt. With that said, Hamed never faced an opponent of Pacquiao's quality.

Pacquiao's relentless aggression at featherweight was reminiscent of the legendary former three-weight world champion Henry Armstrong, although the Filipino's hands may have been even heavier, and he was much quicker of foot. Pacquiao could close the gap in the blink of an eye, so Hamed timing an effective counter might be easier said than done. Even a fighter as seasoned as Barrera struggled to get a foothold against Pacquiao. Find a counter? Barrera could barely find room to breathe.

It is probably appropriate that both of our experts not only disagree on the result, they also disagree on the path to get there.

"I think it would be a shootout, because both of them are gunslingers," Edwards said. "I can see Naz maybe knocking Pacquiao down and running him into something, but overall, the Pacquiao who beat Barrera in 2003, that's a special fighter. I think Naz was great, but I don't know if he's special. From my point of view, I think Pacquiao would stop him in around the eighth or ninth round. There



STEVE MARCUS

Pacquiao and Hamed were used to victory during their primes. Who would win their dream match?

are very few people in the history of boxing who could beat Pacquiao at that time."

"I don't foresee a shootout," countered Malignaggi. "I think Naz would have walked Pacquiao into some really big shots early in that fight. Pacquiao comes out a bit too excited, and I don't see him fighting Naz in a careful manner. Some people might say, 'Oh, the combination punching of Pacquiao,' but if Naz touches you in-between those combinations, or if he's ripping your head off with a monster uppercut, it's not going to take too many of those to change your perspective on the fight or to knock you out. Pacquiao's instinct is to be offensive, and he responds to negativity by being more offensive and showing more heart. That's why I believe he gets knocked out by Naz. You have to be smart to beat Naz, and styles make fights."

If you're looking for me to break the deadlock, then I'm sorry to let you down, but I'm on the fence. The only thing I will say is that Hamed needs the knockout. In the lower weight classes, Pacquiao was only outpointed once, and that was by Erik Morales at 130 pounds. To do that, "El Terrible" had to match Pacquiao for work rate and intensity, and that's just not the style that Hamed fought in. If Pacquiao-Hamed goes the distance, then I see Pacquiao as a runaway winner, but he's also capable of winning by knockout. The big question is: What happens if Hamed lands his best shot? Personally, I think Pacman would need a pillow.

The result of a cross-generation dream fight obviously comes down to opinion. The only important rule is to keep things balanced. If you've seen dozens of fights featuring one champion but only one or two of the other, then it would pay to do a little research. Pacquiao is still active, whereas "The Prince" fought his last fight in 2002. Pacquiao is almost universally revered, whereas you either loved Hamed or you hated him. Take away all the inessentials and form an opinion based solely on what each fighter brought to the table.

One thing is for sure: Pacquiao-Hamed would have been a fight for the ages.

Tom Gray is Associate Editor for Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

PRINCE NASEEM HAMED: ROYAL RUMBLES

WITH SUPREME SHOWMANSHIP TO MATCH HIS BOXING SKILLS, 'NAZ' CHANGED THE GAME ONE FIGHT AT A TIME

By **Tom Gray**

He was a superstar, and it was all by design.

If Prince Naseem Hamed hadn't engaged in spectacular ring entrances, if he hadn't flipped over the top rope, if he hadn't taunted opponents and told them how many rounds he expected them to last, then his Hall of Fame career wouldn't be anywhere near as memorable as it is today. He would still be remembered as a great fighter, but Hamed always wanted to be more than that … much more.

In his career, "The Prince" (or "Naz") was an incredible fistic personality. He had an almost insane insistence to be heard, confidence that smashed through to arrogance as soon as a mic was thrust in his face, and he was made for television. That entire package was his own creation, but he also worked diligently to become great where it mattered most, and he couldn't do that alone.

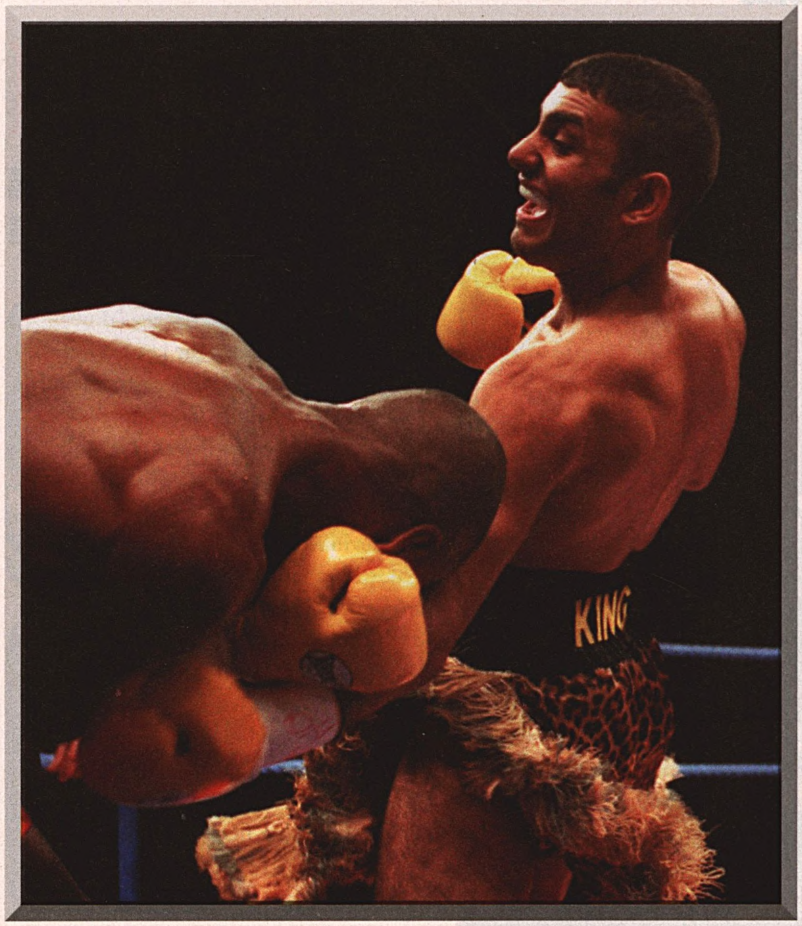
It's almost impossible to overstate how important late trainer Brendan Ingle was in the career of Prince Naseem Hamed. Their names will forever be linked in boxing folklore, and despite the fact that they separated a half dozen fights before the end of Hamed's professional career, it was that engaging little Irishman, founder of the Wincobank gym in Sheffield, England, who will always be credited with nurturing one of the most unique prizefighters in history.

"Brendan set the foundations, not just for me, but any fighter who stepped inside that boxing club, and he was absolutely amazing," Hamed told The Ring. "His strategy of fighting was possibly the best way for you to do well in boxing and leave the sport without being injured. The style was based on a lot of movement, although my overall style ended up very different from anyone else's.

"For me, Brendan was more mentor and philosopher than trainer. He would tell you, 'These are skills you need to be able to avoid punches. These are the punches you need to be throwing.' It was the fundamentals of boxing, and that foundation was so strong for me. My whole thing started with mastering footwork for four years, between the ages of 7 and 11, and all of that was put forward by Brendan."

Hamed's professional career lasted a touch over 10 years, between April 1992 and May 2002. During that time, the charismatic Englishman of Yemeni descent captured a trio of world title belts at featherweight and solidified himself as the biggest star in British boxing. Hamed also crossed over with American audiences, signing off on a lucrative TV deal with HBO in 1997, and he is largely responsible for the subsequent wave of lighter-weight stars receiving global recognition and massive purses. He fought in a time when The Ring had discontinued its recognition of division champions, but recently became the first fighter in boxing history to receive an honorary belt for his accomplishments in the sport.

Hamed now recalls his most notable victories… and ring entrances:

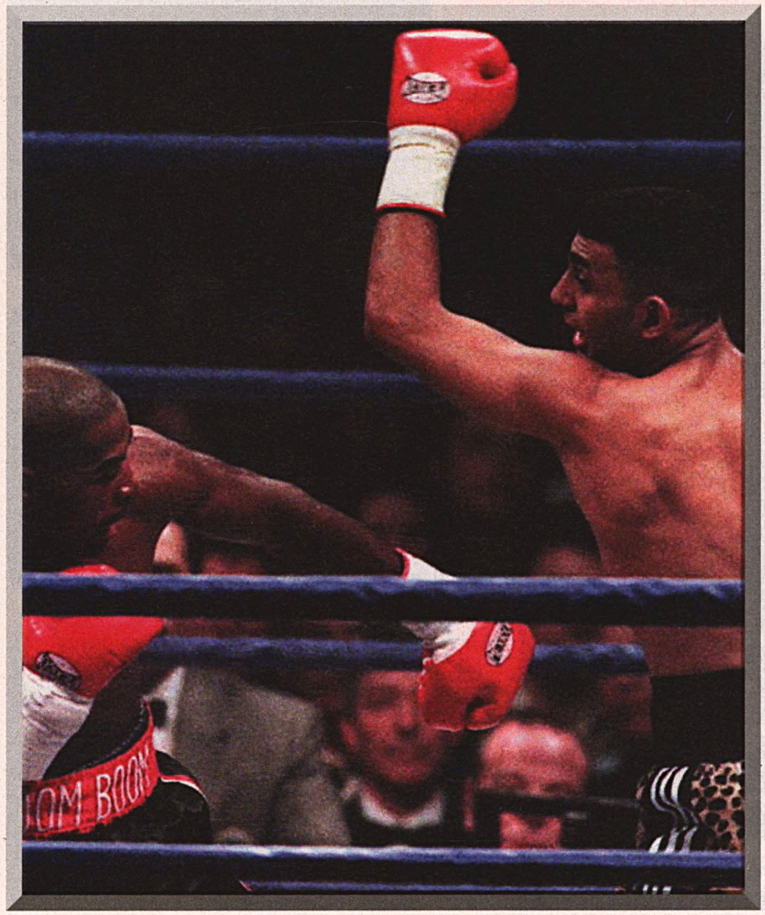


STEVE ROBINSON

September 30, 1995/Cardiff Arms Park, Cardiff, Wales • Titles: WBO featherweight

"It was a master class. Steve Robinson did very well in his career, but I had strengths that went far beyond his strengths. I loved the fight, and despite the fact that he looked hard from the outside, despite the fact that he was a tall, strong featherweight, I knew it would be an easy night. And it was. He never won a round; he never won a minute of a round. The fight was in his hometown, it was very hostile, but in life and in boxing you should always use what confronts you in the best way possible. Always be positive. The fact that his fans were shouting 'Hamed. Hamed. Who the fuck is Hamed?' made me feel (laughs) … I'm gonna show you exactly who I am! Just give me a little time to make my entrance, and once I get started, you're going to do one of two things: You're either gonna go very quiet or you're gonna leave once your champion is dismantled, smashed up, exposed and taken out."

RESULT: HAMED TKO 8



TOM JOHNSON

February 8, 1997/London Arena, London • Titles: IBF/WBO featherweight

"'Boom Boom' Johnson was a fight where I could prove myself to the boxing world, which, for me, especially at that time, was America. I said there was a British Arab who was going to be very special, and I couldn't wait for that fight. 'Boom Boom' Johnson had an amazing career; he'd been world champion for a very long time and made 12 defenses of his belt. He looked me in the eyes and said, 'You think you can knock me out? What makes you think you can do what nobody else has ever done?' I said, 'Tom, you're gonna realize there's a time for everything. I've visualized this, and I believe I will knock you out, Tom.' It was a right uppercut, and the timing of it came down to him making this certain movement. I just caught him as he was making the move, and the shot landed pinpoint. When I look back at the fight, it's funny … we had an Arab sponsor on the canvas, and when I dropped him, he landed right on it. All the insignia said was 'The Arabs.'"

RESULT: HAMED TKO 8

JOSE BADILLO

October 11, 1997/Sheffield Arena, Sheffield • Titles: WBO featherweight

"Badillo was a good fighter who performed at a high level, but, just like many of my opponents, he was made to look very ordinary. That was down to the style, the ability, the confidence, the punching power and everything else that I had. The Badillo fight was for the Sheffield fans because it was 'The Full Monty' (a critically acclaimed comedy set in Sheffield) promotion. I also knew that Kevin Kelley was ringside, and the fight was being broadcast on Showtime in America. The audience was broader for this particular fight, and I had to put on another master class. I wanted to show my speed, my ability, my footwork, my confidence and how colorful I was. I wanted to show that the whole thing, when it was wrapped up nicely, was poetry in motion. In that fight, I showed it."

RESULT: HAMED TKO 7

KEVIN KELLEY

December 19, 1997/Madison Square Garden, New York • Titles: WBO featherweight

"It was a very risky fight, because it was put up or shut up. This guy, in my eyes, was possibly the best fighter I ever fought. I remember him having untold amounts of experience. His ability, his speed, his achievements and the way he fought was at the highest level. Kevin could take you out with one punch, and he was very dangerous. I could never have thought the fight would go the way it did, developing into what some people have called the featherweight Hagler-Hearns. When Larry Merchant said that, I remember thinking what an amazing compliment that is. I was also told that while Madison Square Garden ranked their number one fight as Muhammad Ali versus Joe Frazier in 1971, they said the second-best fight was Prince Naseem versus Kevin Kelley, so that's another history-breaker. This wasn't just hearsay; I'm sure (former HBO Sports president) Seth Abraham, who had moved to Madison Square Garden, told me that."

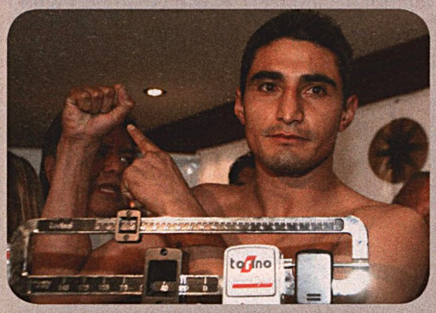
RESULT: HAMED KO 4

DREAM FIGHTS FOR A PRINCE

HAMED TAKES AIM AT FIVE HALL OF FAMERS HE MISSED DURING HIS REIGN

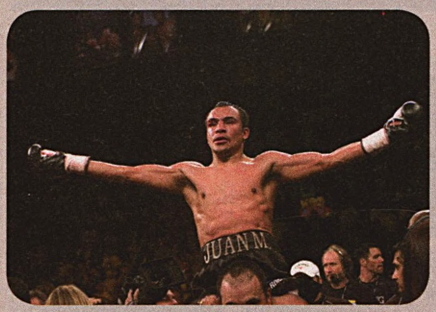
JOHNNY TAPIA

"Johnny Tapia was offered way more money than he would get fighting anyone else, probably double or triple the amount, and he wouldn't risk it. And do you know what? I don't blame him. Johnny Tapia was an amazing style for me, because he was like a goalkeeper; he stopped a lot of shots. As good as he was, as a former world champion, he would not have been able to take the power. But, then again, there weren't many featherweights who could."



ERIK MORALES

"Erik Morales was an amazing world champion. I saw him recently at the WBC convention in Baku, and I would have gone up and gave him respect, but he didn't want to speak to me. The reason for that is he was always afraid to fight me. He was offered untold amounts of money, but he would not come to the table. I always found that strange because of how good he was, his achievements and who he fought in the sport. But I always felt in my heart that his style was absolutely perfect for me."

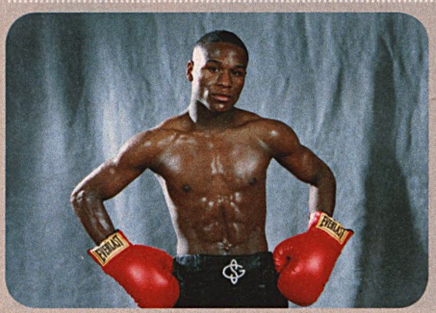


JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

"I never refused or ducked a fight in my life. Looking back on it, Marquez wasn't flash, he wasn't awkward and he didn't use lots of movement. He was a great fighter, but that was another style that I could have beaten easily. It wasn't meant to be, and I don't know whether that was down to managers or promoters, but the fight not happening certainly wasn't down to me. I always enjoyed watching Marquez, but when Floyd (Mayweather Jr.) schooled him and barely took a punch, just by using movement with no punching power, that showed me what I would have done with him in my prime."

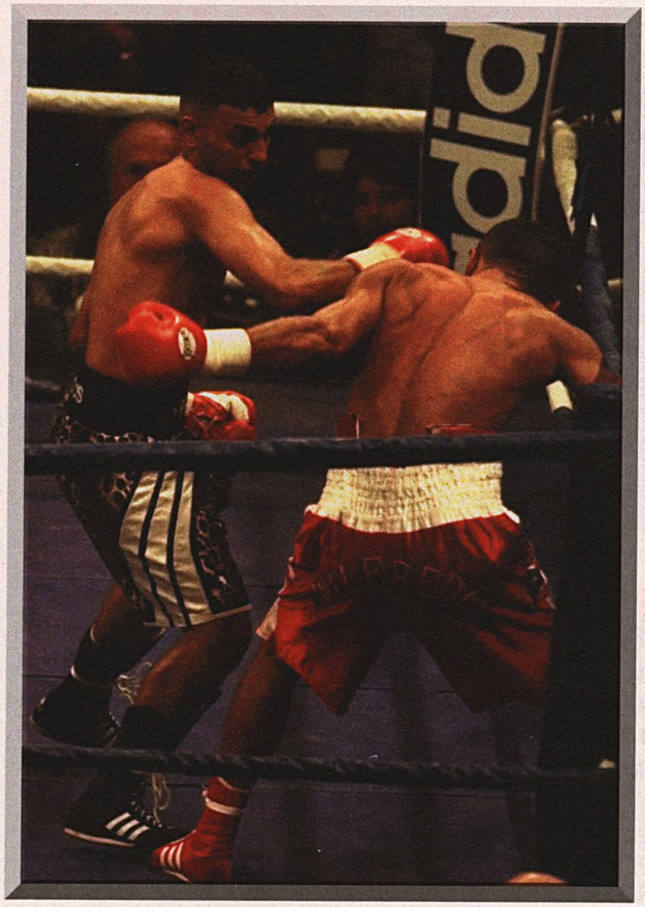
ARTURO GATTI

"I never found out why that fight never got made, but I think it was down to the fact that he was heavier than me. He was a weight class heavier, and I never fought at 130 pounds. They all wanted to fight me because I was the golden kid at the time. I was the one that demanded and commanded big paychecks. That fight was discussed when I'd just cracked open the floodgates for all the (smaller) fighters to get paid. But I could have fought Gatti at a catchweight, and it would have been very easy to smash him up. Gatti would have been destroyed in half the time Floyd did him in."



FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.

"That would have been an amazing fight. Now, you have to bear in mind that I started my career as a flyweight and won my first world title in my featherweight debut. But, honestly, I should have capped my career at (junior featherweight). My best weight probably wasn't even featherweight. Floyd was at his best as a junior lightweight and a lightweight, before he moved on to junior welterweight and welterweight. It really didn't make too much sense to fight guys who were two or three weight classes above me. But as great as Floyd was, if we take it to a dream fight, I had devastating punching power – concussive punching power – combined with my speed and accuracy. At my best, I will never allow a fighter to go 12 rounds without cracking him with one of my rocket launchers."

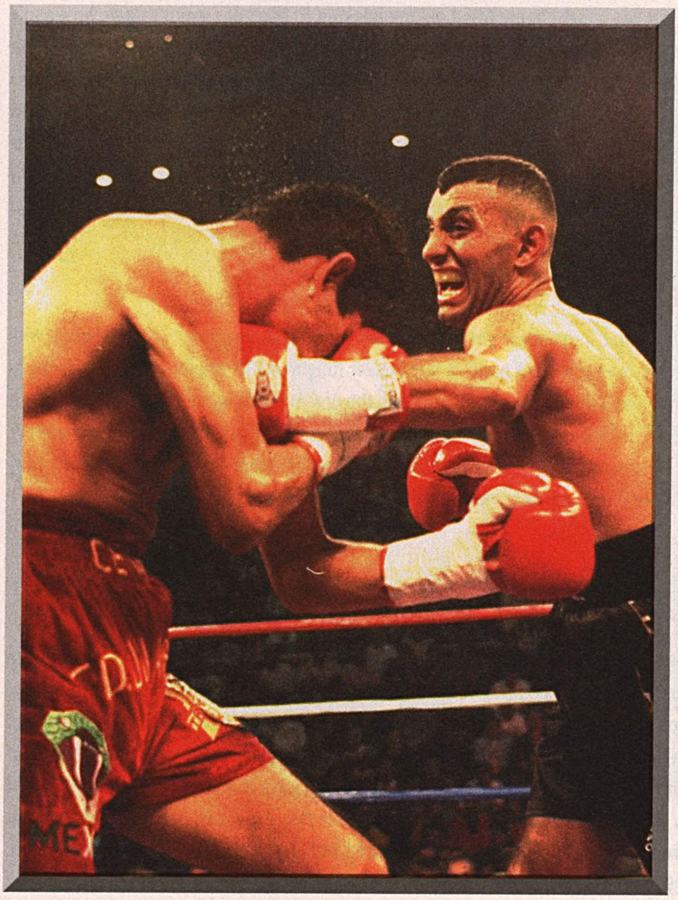


WILFREDO VAZQUEZ

April 18, 1998/Nynex Arena, Manchester •
Titles: WBO featherweight

"Vazquez was WBA champion, but there was so much political stuff going on between the governing bodies. There was a lot of hassle, and I still don't understand it today. I don't know whether the WBA stripped him or if there was something wrong, but I was so disappointed (to not be fighting for the WBA title), I'm not gonna lie. I always wondered, 'Why the hell is this a unification fight without his belt on the line? This is not fair. I'm fighting the current WBA featherweight champion.' [Editor's note: Vazquez held the WBA title when the fight was made, but was stripped in March.] When I saw heroes of mine like Sugar Ray Leonard in unification fights, all these belts were at stake. Why can't this happen for me? Vazquez was a real, legitimate, amazing world champion who had achieved a lot in the sport. To beat somebody like that and not get the belt is unfair and a robbery. But afterwards I heard directly from the WBA, who acknowledged that I'd beat their champion, and they sent me a belt. Despite all the political nonsense that happened beforehand, that showed a really high level of respect from the WBA to me. Nobody can deny me and say I wasn't WBA champion."

RESULT: HAMED TKO 7

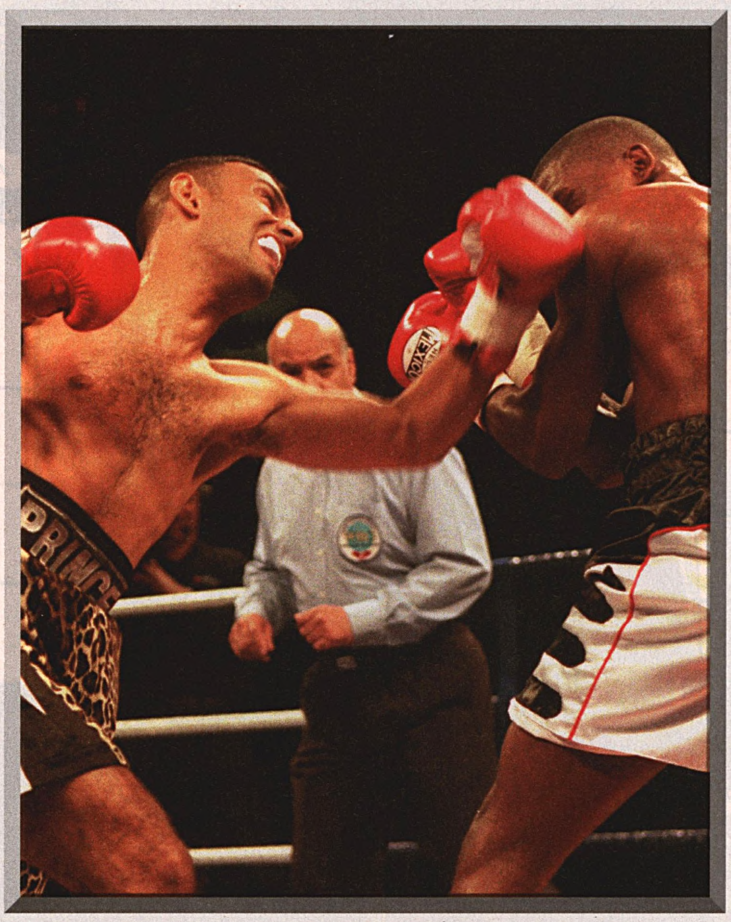


CESAR SOTO

October 22, 1999/Joe Louis Arena, Detroit •
Titles: WBC/WBO featherweight

"Soto was a strong, solid (WBC) world champion, and the guy who held the title before him was Luisito Espinosa. Espinosa, like a lot of champions back then, would never fight me. (My former promoter, Frank) Warren will tell you, they just refused to fight, and that's despite the fact that they would be making career-high paydays. But the other side of it is the world champions who did fight me were never the same afterwards. The fight seemed to change them. Fighting for the WBC belt was a huge honor, because that same belt was held by my hero, Muhammad Ali. The green belt is a very special belt, and it always will be. I got on really well with Jose Sulaiman, God rest his soul, who was half-Arab, half-Mexican – and I loved the fact that he was half-Arab; he was Lebanese. His son, Mauricio, is a beautiful guy, and we get on really well. Soto had a very negative style, and he did everything he could not to get knocked out. But the entrance with The Four Tops, selling out the Joe Louis Arena and fight week … it was interesting. It was a great time."

RESULT: HAMED UD 12

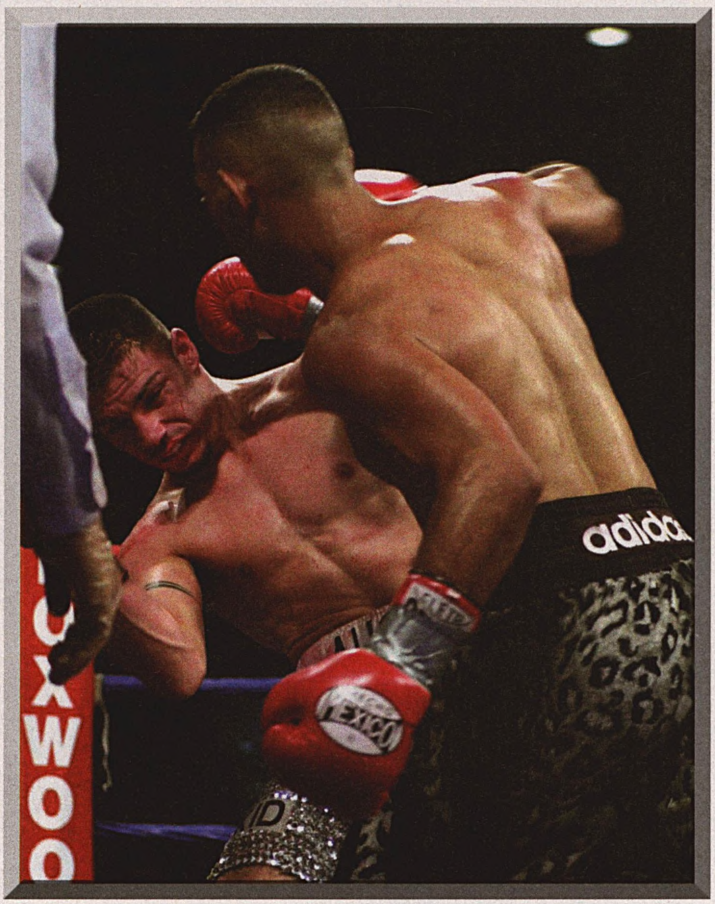


VUYANI BUNGU

March 11, 2000/Olympia, London • Titles: WBO featherweight

"That was one of my most special nights, and I was looking to create a form of boxing history. I was friends with one of the biggest rap stars in the world at that time – Puff Daddy, P. Diddy – and I remember calling him. I said, 'Do you want to be part of the biggest boxing entrance in the world?' And I remember his words clearly. He said, 'It would be an honor! Just tell me the country, the place and the time, and I'll be there!' At that time, fighters weren't bringing rap stars and music stars into boxing. People weren't making entrances that way. I said from the beginning that I was different, and I love the fact that I captured the world's imagination. That was the flying carpet ring entrance, probably my best entrance, and when the flying carpet came down, Puff Daddy was there. I had an amazing training camp for the fight and we had a South African sparring partner, Jackie (Gunguluza), who could emulate Bungu better than Bungu himself. The sparring was way harder than the fight, and I mean like 10 times harder."

RESULT: HAMED KO 4



AUGIE SANCHEZ

August 19, 2000/Foxwoods Resort, Mashantucket, Connecticut • Titles: WBO featherweight

"He knocked me down and deserved credit for that, but he didn't get it (officially). But I didn't mind that (I was knocked down), because that's honestly one of the only times in my career that I had a full premonition of what was going to happen in that fight. I got all my brothers and friends around the pool table the night before and told them what was going to happen. The only thing I hadn't visualized was Sanchez walking out of the ring, and it just so happens that he was carried from the ring on a stretcher that night. Thank God he was OK. The knockout was on a four-punch combination and he was probably out by the third, so the final right hand didn't need to be thrown. Sanchez was the last fighter to truly beat Floyd Mayweather Jr. (as an amateur); he was a great fighter and the likes of (Erik) Morales and (Marco Antonio) Barrera didn't want to fight him. Kevin Kelley helped train Sanchez for the fight, and I told him, 'Kevin, he won't go past the round you did,' and he didn't."

RESULT: HAMED TKO 4

A MATCH WITHOUT A GRUDGE

CANELO ALVAREZ WILL SET ASIDE HIS RIVALRY WITH GENNADIY GOLOVKIN TO PURSUE HISTORY AND A FRESH MATCHUP AGAINST THE FRIENDLY BUT FORMIDABLE SERGEY KOVALEV

By **Mitch Abramson**

The sight of Canelo Alvarez and Sergey Kovalev announcing their light heavyweight blockbuster at a press conference with hugs and a selfie was a little different.

Usually fighters embrace after the final bell, not before.

But one thing was certain of that surreal September 18 presser: Canelo looked happy to face Kovalev and Kovalev looked over the moon to take on the sport's reigning rainmaker. And the fans in attendance seemed pleased about this rabbit-out-of-a-hat matchup that few saw coming.

So why wasn't Gennadiy Golovkin standing on the dais at Union Station in Los Angeles in a Jordan Brand sweatsuit for a third fight with Canelo?

The making of Canelo-Kovalev was a marriage of convenience for practical, financial, political and, perhaps most of all, personal reasons. It's also a really good matchup with two of the biggest names in the sport. And it didn't involve Golovkin, who had apparently talked his way out of another lucrative fight with Alvarez (52-1-2, 35 KOs).

Canelo and Kovalev (34-3-1, 29 KOs) posed for photos, bro-hugging like friends receiving each other at the airport after a transatlantic flight.

It was hard to imagine Golovkin acting the same way.

But maybe that was the point.

Canelo, 29, will move up two weight divisions to face the 36-year-old Kovalev on November 2 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, streamed on the DAZN network, for Kovalev's 175-pound WBO title. The 5-foot-8 Canelo is vying to become just the fourth Mexican fighter after Erik Morales, Juan Manuel Marquez and Jorge Arce to win world titles in four divisions.

Golovkin, meanwhile, was set to face Sergiy Derevyanchenko on October 5 for the IBF title that was stripped from Alvarez after a deal couldn't be made for him to face his mandatory – Derevyanchenko.

So how did we get here? And how was it that DAZN had invested so much money in an existing rivalry but got this instead? The network paid a fortune for the opportunity to match Canelo and Golovkin in a boxing ring for eternity, a five-year deal worth $365 million to Canelo and a nine-figure contract to Golovkin.

Asked why he didn't want to face Golovkin for a third time, Canelo sighed and said it didn't motivate him the same way a fight against Kovalev did.

"He doesn't present a challenge," Canelo said, adding that a third fight is not going to happen anytime soon. Left unsaid was that he's still probably stung by comments from Golovkin bad-mouthing him in the run-up to their second fight in September 2018.

Canelo instead looked to someone whom he had nothing personal against. He met Kovalev in 2012 in Big Bear, where they were training, and established a mutual respect that helped pave the way for this fight to be made. What we have instead of the start of the 25th round against the still

TOM HOGAN-HOGANPHOTOS.COM

Sergey Kovalev and Canelo Alvarez engaged in an intense-but-respectful staredown during the amicable kick-off press conference for their November 2 light heavyweight title bout.

very dangerous Golovkin is a far more unpredictable and fresher matchup.

"It's an honor for me to share the ring with a fighter like Kovalev, who I met in 2012," Canelo said at the kickoff presser. "Now, we're about to make history. I know it's going to be the most difficult fight of my professional career. I will give the best I have in the ring, and that day we can yell, 'Viva Mexico!'"

Not that the fight was easy to make. The promotional entities had to smooth over a number of rough edges to consummate the deal. With Top Rank reportedly owning rights to Kovalev as part of his deal to face Eleider Alvarez on ESPN, Main Events (which promotes Kovalev) reportedly had to compensate Top Rank to allow them to move forward with a deal with Golden Boy to make the fight on November 2. (Still with me?)

The bout was initially pegged for September 14 but had to be pushed back after Kovalev finalized a deal to face Anthony Yarde on August 24 for a mandatory defense in Chelyabinsk, Russia, where Kovalev is from.

Discussing the matchup with Canelo, Kovalev looked refreshed and happy, like a man who had just found $1,000 on the street. He was thankful for Canelo giving him the opportunity, taking a deferential tone – a tacit admission that he's the "B" side on November 2.

Kovalev will be making the second defense of the WBO title in what is his third title reign. While past his prime, the six-foot Russian is still one of the sport's most fearsome punchers, and his physical advantages were obvious during the ceremonial pose-off; he looked down at Canelo as if he was standing on a chair.

"Thanks to Canelo and his team for making this opportunity to get this fight," Kovalev said. "I think this is a big test for me in my boxing career, because this is one of the best fighters in the world in boxing right now. I'm happy and I am excited."

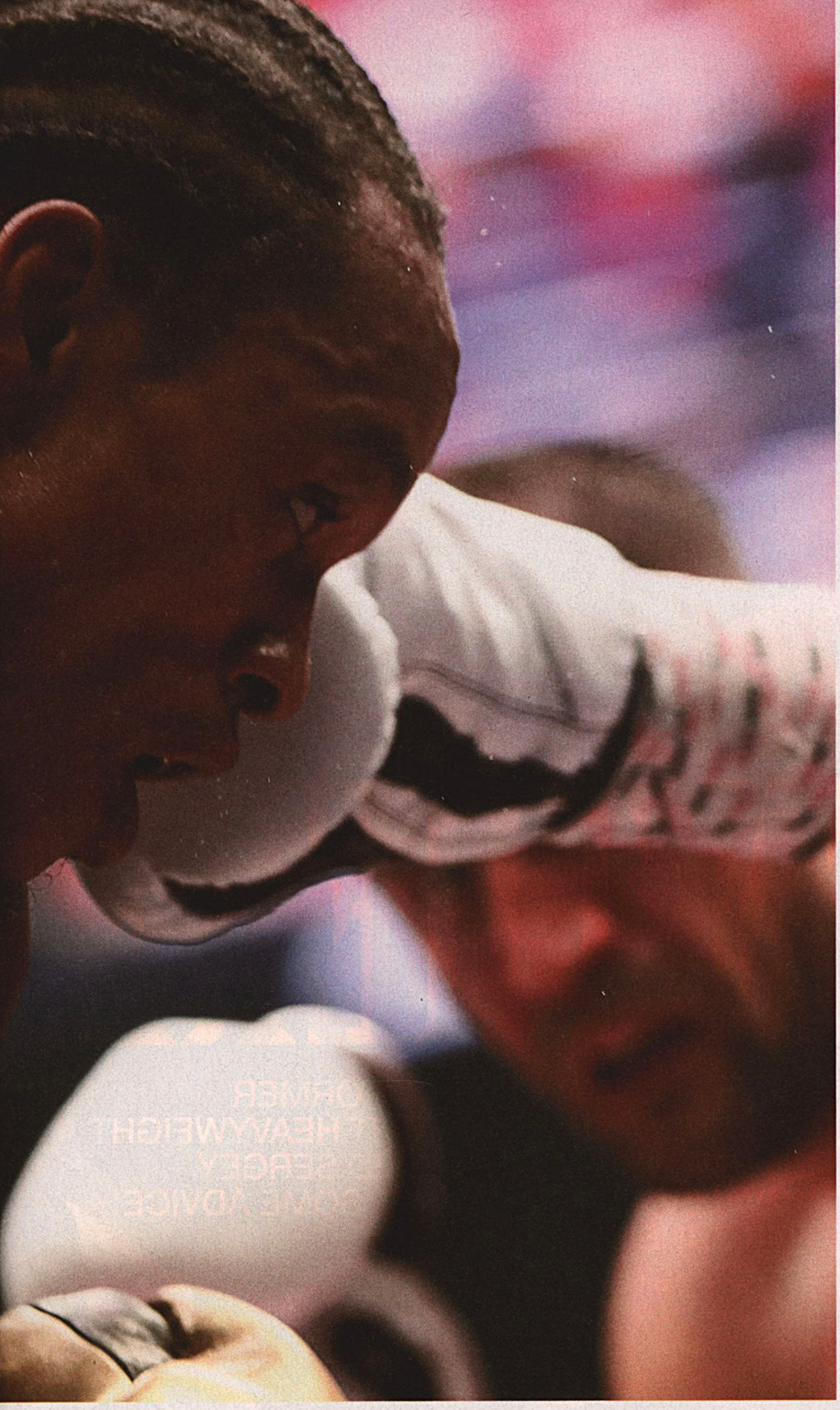
When Kovalev heard from his manager, Egis Klimas, that Canelo was interested in fighting him, Kovalev thought it was a joke. The idea came out of nowhere, a total curveball that seemed to be the musings of a fighter who was trying anything to not face Golovkin because of the bad blood.

Once Kovalev was told he wouldn't have to deplete himself at a catchweight against Canelo, he was sold, even though he had just endured a difficult fight against Yarde, winning by 11th-round knockout. "Are you kidding me? Give me a contract, any time, any place, and we got it," Kovalev recalled.

Unlike when he fought Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. at a catchweight of 164 pounds in 2017, Canelo didn't ask for a lower weight to try to diminish the larger Kovalev, because he wanted to show people that he was up for the challenge and to "make history."

Along with the aforementioned record involving Mexican fighters,

CANELO: ETHAN MILLER



Both men are coming off tough fights, with Canelo outpointing former titleholder Daniel Jacobs and Kovalev surviving a near-disaster to stop Anthony Yarde.

if he wins, Canelo will be just the fourth fighter to win world titles at 154 and 175 pounds regardless of heritage, joining Hall of Famers Sugar Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns and Mike McCallum.

It will be Alvarez's third fight since he won a majority decision against Golovkin in September 2018; after that, he knocked out super middleweight Rocky Fielding in three rounds in December 2018 and decisioned Danny Jacobs in May 2019.

Buddy McGirt, Kovalev's trainer, praised Alvarez for avoiding any gamesmanship in making the fight at 175 pounds.

"Canelo, I've always admired you. Your trainers did a great job with you. I gotta admit that," McGirt said. "I really take my hat off to you for having the balls for taking a step up and not having a catchweight but do what real champions do and step up to the challenge."

Kathy Duva, CEO of Main Events, took the stance that Alvarez was facing Kovalev because he was trying to burnish his credentials and grow his own legacy, explaining that the late Pernell Whitaker "taught me how great fighters think."

There was no mention of Golovkin from anyone. It was almost as if GGG didn't exist. Golovkin who? Canelo's handlers are betting that by taking on such a huge challenge in Kovalev, it will muffle the call for a third fight with Golovkin. And the plan seems to have worked. The bout with Kovalev has been praised in most corners for its creative matchmaking and the risks involved for both fighters.

The question becomes: If Canelo does away with Kovalev, will he return to middleweight, where Golovkin's name will inevitably come up again? And will Canelo put himself through a third grueling bout and give Golovkin the satisfaction of another career-defining fight – one that DAZN seems to desperately want?

"When talking with Canelo about his career goals, he said he wanted to make history and fight the best," said his promoter, Golden Boy CEO Oscar De La Hoya. "This is why we had to be very strategic and thoughtful in planning out his next fight. And while it may have taken a bit longer than we wanted, we know that it was worth the wait. Canelo has been preparing for this moment, and we know that on November 2 he'll write a new chapter in boxing history."

One that won't involve You-Know-Who.

KOVALEV: VALERY SHARIFULIN

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

BERNARD HOPKINS – A FORMER MIDDLEWEIGHT AND LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP WHO CHALLENGED SERGEY KOVALEV AT AGE 49 – HAS SOME ADVICE FOR CANELO ALVAREZ

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

He liked hearing it. Anyone who knows Bernard Hopkins knows he loved hearing it – those doubts blowing in the wind and whispering into his ears about how he can't win.

In June 2006, Hopkins, then known as "The Executioner," was taking a chance in the minds of many by jumping two weight classes to challenge light heavyweight champ Antonio Tarver. As he often did, Hopkins proved everyone wrong in a dominating virtuoso performance, beating Tarver by unanimous decision. »

Bernard Hopkins knows what it takes to rise from middleweight to challenge a light heavyweight champ – and what it's like to share the ring with Sergey Kovalev.

DON EMMERT

Hopkins says Kovalev is the bigger puncher in the Alvarez matchup.

So, with Canelo Alvarez meeting WBO light heavyweight titleholder Sergey Kovalev on November 2 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, a showdown to be streamed on DAZN in the U.S., what better fighter than Hopkins to pass along wisdom to Alvarez when it comes to jumping two weight classes.

"Canelo dares to be great," Hopkins said. "He's the Evel Knievel of boxing right now, because he is a daredevil who's willing to take chances no one else will.

"Sergey Kovalev is dangerous. I should know. I felt those fists. I felt his power. I'm sure Canelo is going to hear the same things I heard when I moved up to fight Tarver. I know a lot of people wanted Canelo to fight Gennadiy Golovkin a third time. Why? Watch the DVR of the first two fights. We've seen it already."

There comes a stage in each fighter's career, Hopkins notes, when they keep improving with each fight. Hopkins feels Canelo is currently in that period of his boxing maturity.

He also believes Canelo is making the right move to help his body.

"I think the weight difference helps Canelo, and it's going to be easy for him to make 175. And his body will thank him for it, because he will face Kovalev a lot more comfortable and stronger.

"Remember, Canelo is coming up. Kovalev is going to have to watch what he does to stay on weight. That can be a draining process, especially when you're an older fighter who's been in some wars like Kovalev. Toward the end at middleweight for me, it became too much. I should have made the move (up in weight) before I fought Jermain Taylor.

"The move up will be the least of Canelo's worries."

Can Alvarez carry the kind of power he'll need to keep "Krusher" off of him?

"I think Canelo has the kind of power that Kovalev will respect," Hopkins said. "Canelo will do more damage early than later. The puncher without a doubt is Kovalev. Both guys will test their skill levels."

A younger Bernard Hopkins would have given Kovalev a better fight than he did in November 2014. It was the worst beating Hopkins took in his professional career. Judges Larry Layton (120-106), Carlos Ortiz Jr. (120-107) and Clark Sammartino (120-107) didn't give the veteran, "The Alien" by that time, a round in the fight.

This time, Kovalev will be the "old man," at 36, while Alvarez is 29.

"The younger version of me would have given Kovalev more work," Hopkins said. "Don't get me wrong, it still would have been a good fight. The younger version of me in my 30s would have had more energy than when I was 49, when I faced Kovalev.

"That's the key to this whole thing. Canelo has to make Kovalev work. Canelo does his best work inside. He's going to come forward. And his defense is not appreciated at all, in my opinion."

If Alvarez can lure Kovalev into an inside fight, Hopkins believes the Russian will expend energy and become hesitant.

"Canelo has to make Kovalev pay every time he misses," Hopkins said. "He has to hit Kovalev in the chest, or on the waist, or on his arms. Hit him anywhere he can and make Kovalev think.

"Once Kovalev begins to think and finds out this guy is there to be hit – but he can't be hit – that will frustrate Kovalev. He'll be reluctant to throw later in the fight. It's the strategy that I used when I beat Tito Trinidad. You're there, and then you're not there."

Hopkins believes that as the rounds mount up, Alvarez can accumulate enough of a lead to win by decision, but he made it clear that he has great respect for Kovalev; he said he'd pick the Russian to win if the opponent was anyone other than Alvarez. The Philly legend even admits he liked Kovalev over Andre Ward.

Hopkins added that the aging Kovalev may lack the skill set, speed, defense and quickness of Alvarez, but he still possesses overwhelming power.

"Like George Foreman against Michael Moorer," Hopkins pointed out. "Foreman was losing that fight, and one shot – it was over. Kovalev has that kind of power. One thing power can do, whether you're winning or not, it can bail you out of trouble.

"The only time a man like Kovalev is not dangerous is when he's dead. Otherwise, I like Canelo winning this fight. He's smart, he's courageous and this is his time.

"When I made the move up to 175, it made me stronger. I felt more relaxed. I wasn't killing myself anymore. Canelo has added a weight-training regimen to his program. You add that strength to his skills, Canelo would be dangerous for anyone at 175.

"My last piece of advice is this: Don't get hit flush with Kovalev's power!"

Note: Bernard Hopkins is a part-owner of Golden Boy Promotions, which promotes Alvarez.

BATTLE PLAN: CANELO ALVAREZ VS. SERGEY KOVALEV

TWO CELEBRATED TRAINERS TAKE SIDES AND EXPLAIN HOW THEY'D PREPARE THE COMBATANTS FOR THEIR NOVEMBER CLASH

By **Ryan Songalia**

It's not likely that many people had Sergey Kovalev on their Canelo Alvarez Bingo cards a few months ago. It's an audacious move on Canelo's part, stepping up from middleweight in his last fight to light heavyweight for a clash against the WBO titleholder, who had at one point been a single belt shy of undisputed. And while Alvarez had moved up to super middleweight to face fringe player Rocky Fielding last December, Kovalev is no Rocky Fielding.

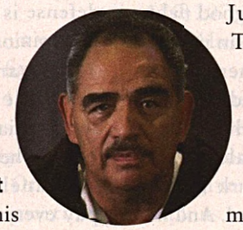
He's no young champion, either. At 36, Kovalev is beginning to look his age in the ring with his 2017 stoppage loss to Andre Ward in their rematch and continuing with his seventh-round knockout defeat by Eleider Alvarez in 2018. To Kovalev's credit, he rebounded both times, moving camps to work with head trainer Buddy McGirt and avenging the loss to Alvarez with a virtuoso boxing performance against a man who seemed unprepared for the possibility that the veteran would make any adjustments. Kovalev overcame some rough moments against Anthony Yarde in his last defense before scoring an 11th-round knockout of the worn-down Englishman at the end of a stiff jab.

But while Kovalev towered over Canelo at their press conference in Los Angeles, it could be an omen that Alvarez, perhaps the best body-puncher in boxing, has a lot of target to work with in the Russian's rib cage, which emerged as a possible weak point in the Ward rematch. Alvarez (52-1-2, 35 KOs) appears to be in his physical prime at 29 and, in May, defended the Ring Magazine middleweight championship with a clear decision over Danny Jacobs, whom many picked to give him lots of trouble.

Kovalev's act of taking a selfie with Alvarez did little to dissuade cynics who say "Krusher" is looking to cash out against the fighter with the most lucrative broadcast deal in the sport's history.

The Ring spoke with two trainers – Abel Sanchez and Robert Garcia – and asked them to break down what the two fighters need to do to emerge victorious on November 2 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Sanchez is well-acquainted with both fighters, having trained Kovalev briefly early in his pro career and going to war against Alvarez in two hotly debated fights in the corner of Gennadiy Golovkin. Sanchez gave his take on Kovalev's strategy. Garcia, who spent plenty of time around Kovalev when he trained at Garcia's gym years ago, analyzed what Alvarez should do to make sure he gets the win.

ABEL SANCHEZ ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN KOVALEV



I would make sure that Kovalev understood that his fight is on the outside. His fight is with that great jab, and Kovalev can punch a little bit. As long as he keeps Canelo on the outside, he'll have an easier time of it. Kovalev has one big plus on his side and that's Buddy McGirt.

Kovalev has to make sure he has a lot of speedsters in the gym, because it's not gonna be so much the height that's a problem; it's gonna be the fact that Canelo is a 154-pounder coming up to 175 and is gonna be a heck of a lot faster on the inside. Kovalev can't afford to allow him to be comfortable on the inside.

I think that just having a guy like Buddy McGirt in the corner will be an asset, because Buddy will know how to prepare for a fast guy like that. Buddy, when he was a welterweight, fought a lot of speedsters, so he knows what it's gonna take. It's not so much the conditioning but the mental part of it, Buddy being there.

Canelo has grown immensely in the last three or four fights. Floyd's really the only one on record that has beaten him. I thought Gennady beat him, but on record Floyd's the only one to beat him. He's got this chip on his shoulder that no one's better than him, and I think that you have to take that away from him if you're gonna beat him. It's gonna be a difficult fight for Kovalev to win.

Just keep Canelo away. The body shots are gonna be very important for Canelo and detrimental to Sergey.

Feints and double jabs and even triple jabs, just making sure that Kovalev doesn't get complacent and just throw one jab and allow Canelo to get underneath and pound him to the body. It doesn't take very much for a guy like Canelo to get on the inside, and if he hits a couple of good shots each round, by the middle rounds it could be a different fight.

I think in this instance Kovalev is fighting an exceptional fighter. Canelo has grown into a very good fighter who works just as well on the inside as he does on the outside. With Kovalev, I'm sure that he understands that Canelo is gonna pound him down to the body and wear him down to the point where he can have him as a standing-still target. And if he does that, then he's done his job.

I think before he got with Buddy, he was just so obstinate and so damn stubborn and not letting anybody coach him and accepting expertise from coaches. He had John David Jackson, who was a two-division world champion who obviously knows boxing, and had very good amateur coaches from Russia. But he's so obstinate. It appears now that he's listening to Buddy. If he listens to Buddy, he's not gonna get tired, because Buddy's gonna prepare him in the gym to go 12 good rounds. It wasn't so much that he wasn't getting in condition; he was fighting on his own. If he allows Canelo to pound him to his body, then conditioning will be an issue.

Canelo, because of his weight, has never really fought anybody (who fights as tall as Kovalev). If you watch the last Golovkin fight, Golovkin controlled him with the jab. If Kovalev can do that, then it could be a 12-round decision fight.

ROBERT GARCIA ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN ALVAREZ

It's gonna be whatever his natural weight is, whether it's 171 or 172. Whatever it is, he'll be fine. Mayweather, when he fought at welterweight, he had no problem coming in a pound or two under. Pacquiao came in two or three pounds under and never had a problem. I think wherever Canelo feels comfortable. I do believe that he might be faster if he comes in two or three pounds lighter than the weight limit. But if he's comfortable at 175, then he'll be fine.

Canelo's already a big guy; even at 160 he's solid. At 175, he's still gonna look strong and solid. My brother Mikey moving up two divisions, it was hard for him, because he's a lot smaller. Mikey came from being a featherweight, so it's a big size difference. With Canelo, he really is a solid middleweight, so moving up 15 pounds, I don't think we're gonna see that much of a difference in his body. I think it's gonna be about him being more fast and explosive. I think he's still gonna carry his power.

I'm sure he will be sparring bigger guys. Kovalev has a few inches of height advantage, so Canelo should spar taller guys. They don't have to be as big or strong as Kovalev, but he should be able to find taller. If they're heavier, I think that would be good, because Canelo's gonna have to be able to get used to that weight inside the ring. Fight night, Kovalev might be 190, 195. Canelo's probably gonna gain no more than 8-10 pounds. There will be a weight difference on fight night, so Canelo's gotta get used to sparring partners pushing him around and work those kind of tricks.

I don't think the reach will be a problem for Canelo, because I don't think Kovalev is gonna be any faster than Canelo. I think Canelo could actually box Kovalev if he wants to, and my guess is he's gonna box smart the first few rounds and then pick it up in the late rounds. He'll find his way in. He has really fast head movement, and as soon as he makes Kovalev miss, he's gonna slip in and counter with body shots.

The last few fights that Kovalev has had, those are the fights Canelo needs to see. I would also advise Canelo to watch when Kovalev was in his prime. I think it's the perfect fight for Canelo to look really good. I don't think it's gonna be a young Kovalev in there – maybe even a little more slow. No matter how hard he trains, when that time comes, your body doesn't respond to all the punishment.

Kovalev has the reach, he's got great power – (he's going to) try to use that reach and land those long, straight punches. I think he has to start off strong, because as we know, especially at the age where he's at, he fades in the late rounds. That's been throughout the past few fights – we've seen that he's faded in the later rounds. That's one thing that they really gotta work on: not fading. But maybe he's at an age where there's nothing he can do anymore, and that's why I pick Canelo in the late rounds. RING

CANELO: AL BELLO; KOVALEV:

FIVE FIGHTS, THREE WEEKS, ONE LEGEND

ONE OF **HENRY ARMSTRONG'S** LESSER-KNOWN FEATS – DEFENDING THE WELTERWEIGHT TITLE FIVE TIMES IN OCTOBER 1939 – IS FURTHER PROOF THAT WE WILL NEVER SEE HIS LIKE AGAIN

By **Lee Groves**

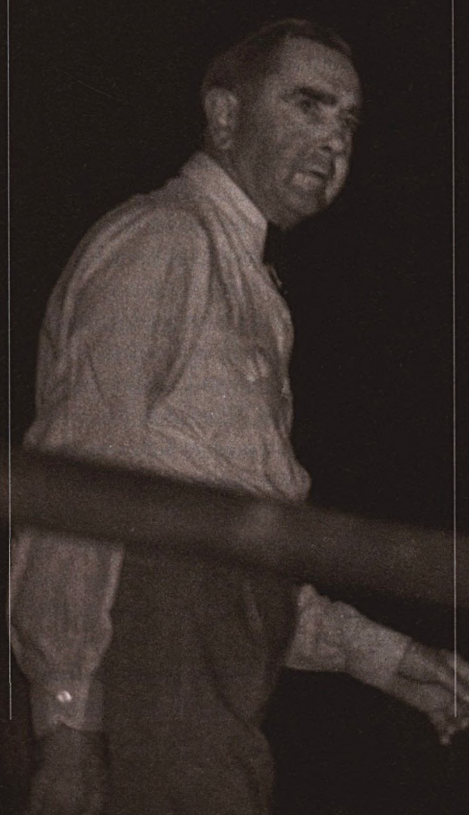
A generation ago, Oscar De La Hoya raised eyebrows by announcing, then achieving, his goal of winning five world title fights in a calendar year (from January 18 to December 6, 1997, to be exact). Current IBF junior lightweight king Tevin Farmer realized his own version of "The Golden Boy's" feat by logging five title fight victories between August 3, 2018, and July 27, 2019 – a breakneck pace in an era where two fights per year is the norm for champions and top contenders.

As impressive as their shared accomplishment is, one ring immortal did them one better. Eighty years ago, Henry Armstrong successfully defended his welterweight championship five times in the same month.

Yes, you read that right.

From October 9 to October 30, 1939, "Homicide Hank" stopped Al Manfredo in four, crushed Howard Scott in two, ripped Richie Fontaine in three, outpointed Jimmy Garrison over 10 and halted Bobby Pacho in four. Even more remarkably, the intervals between fights were four days, seven days, four days and six days, and Armstrong fought in five different states (Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, California and Colorado).

It was a whirlwind schedule worthy of a whirlwind fighter, and, like his signature accomplishment of holding three undisputed divisional championships simultaneously, this venture was designed to draw favorable comparisons to heavyweight champion Joe Louis while also seeking to present Armstrong as a fistic superman.



"What promoters wanted to do was duplicate the feat of Louis, who was dominating the headlines by defending his title almost on a month-to-month basis," said historian Mike Silver, who wrote *The Arc of Boxing: The Rise and Decline of the Sweet Science* and *Stars in the Ring: Jewish Champions in the Golden Age of Boxing*. "Setting up Armstrong's series of defenses was an attempt to arouse more interest in the lighter weight divisions. So, just as Joe Louis had his 'Bum of the Month' club, Henry Armstrong, one can say, had his 'Bum of the Week' club."

Those who knew Armstrong best knew he had an engine that could accommodate such a demanding schedule. After all, he fought 27 times in 1937, 14 times in 1938 and had logged six fights through August 1939, the last of which saw Armstrong lose his lightweight title to Lou Ambers thanks to referee Arthur Donovan awarding five rounds to Ambers due to low blows.

"Armstrong's management knew he was sort of a freak – a fighter with an uncommon amount of stamina, toughness and energy," Silver said. "He was like a windup toy that just kept going."

The Ambers loss snapped a 46-fight winning streak that included 39 KOs and a career-long 27-fight KO string, and Armstrong began anew by mashing Manfredo at Riverview Park in Des Moines. As Armstrong began his October run, there was some dispute as to whether some of the matches passed muster as official championship fights. On the one hand, all five state athletic commissions and The Ring agreed they were title bouts despite the

Henry Armstrong takes a right cross from Jimmy Garrison during their 10-round welterweight championship bout at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles on October 24, 1939.

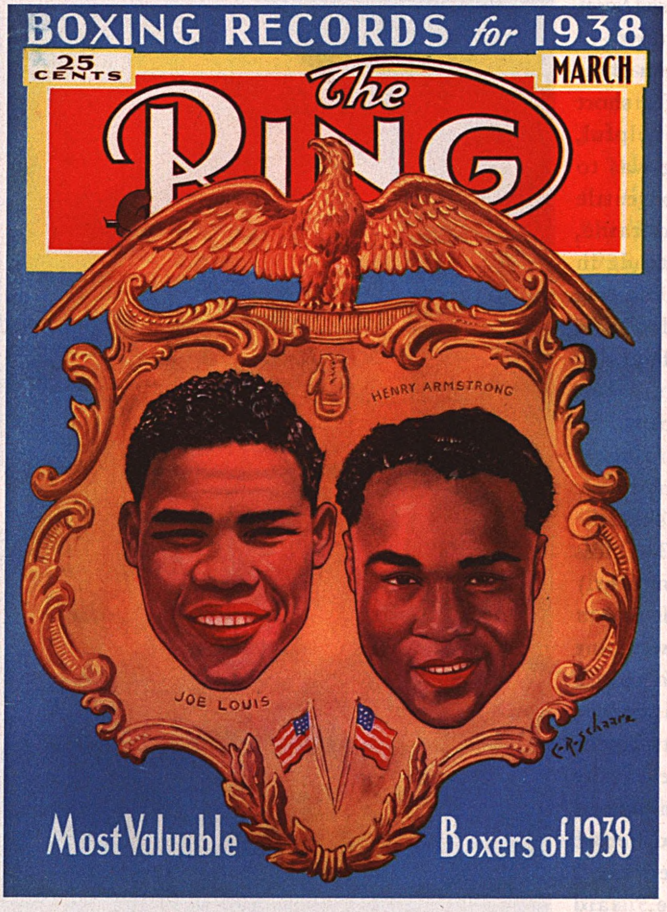
HENRY ARMSTRONG
CHAMPION
FEATHERWEIGHT
LIGHTWEIGHT
WELTERWEIGHT
EVERLAST

fact that none of the challengers were world-rated. Conversely, two officials with the NBA (the forerunner of the WBA) argued Manfredo and Scott didn't qualify because, as per NBA bylaws, they weren't considered one of the top three challengers. In the end, The Ring and the commissions won the argument, because all five fights are included among Armstrong's welterweight record of 19 defenses, but when one digs into the details, the NBA officials had a point in terms of the challengers' standing entering their bouts with Armstrong.

For instance, Manfredo, a Californian with a 74-22-8 (27 KOs) record, had lost two of his last four and had endured a 0-9-3 stretch between June 1936 and August 1937 that included a three-round TKO loss to Armstrong in a welterweight title fight in December 1938. However, both Manfredo and Armstrong scaled below the championship limit (Armstrong weighed 141½ to Manfredo's 146¾) – a must for official title fights – and the NBA's reasoning was dubious, because many of Armstrong's challengers didn't fulfill the "top three" threshold.

"If a guy fought a 'non-title' fight, and, for some reason, if Armstrong comes in under 147 and if his opponent is under 147, technically it's a title fight," said historian and Hall of Fame promoter Russell Peltz. "Whether they were good guys or bad guys, these were officially title fights. (The public) knew what was going to happen, and the fights weren't billed as being the Second Coming. Armstrong wanted to fight often, and he did."

Despite his lack of recent credentials, the 27-year-old Manfredo was a tough cookie, as Armstrong had been one of only two fighters to stop him in 104 previous fights (Eddie Frisco, who halted Manfredo in five rounds in 1936, was the other). The clever Manfredo's backpedaling won him the first round and helped him produce flashes of success in rounds 2 and 3, but Armstrong's pressure and power proved too much in the fourth. A final barrage left Manfredo helplessly draped over the ropes, prompting referee Alex Fidler to intervene at the 1:35 mark.



Armstrong's management hoped to steal some of the spotlight from heavyweight champ Joe Louis by winning multiple titles and by keeping a busy schedule.

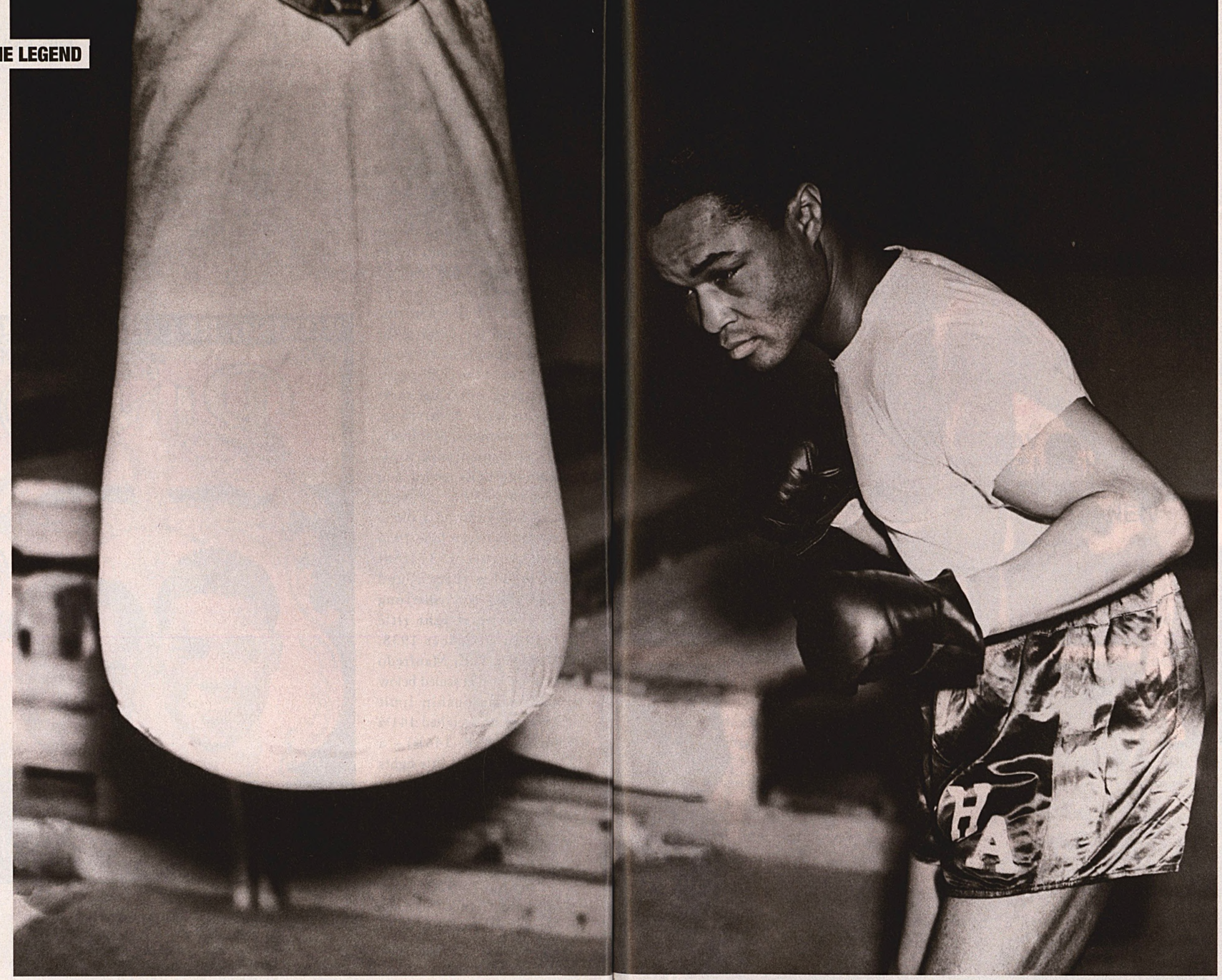
While Manfredo fought only twice more before retiring in January 1940 (he split two fights with Freddie Dixon), Armstrong, who beat Manfredo on Monday, moved on to Minneapolis to fight "Cowboy" Howard Scott on Friday.

"He certainly didn't have to do much sparring," Peltz said with a chuckle.

According to one press report, Armstrong engaged in a "light gymnasium drill" at a Minneapolis gym that included rope-skipping the day before the match. Again, the NBA refused to recognize the Armstrong-Scott fight as a title defense due to Scott not meeting the organization's "top three" mandate. But, like the Manfredo fight, both men scaled far below the welterweight limit (137 for Scott, 141 for Armstrong), and NBA secretary Edward Foster undercut his own organization's argument by stating the NBA would recognize Scott as champion should Armstrong be knocked out.

Like Manfredo, Scott was a onetime contender who was near the end of his career. In just over nine years, the 28-year-old Scott was 64-40-11 and had beaten the likes of Battling Battalino (twice), Frankie Klick and Eddie Zivic (brother of Fritzie). But with only 13 KO wins, Scott's fists presented no serious threat to Armstrong and, worse yet, he came into the match on a six-fight losing streak and a 10-for-11 slide. In other words, he was the perfect opponent for Armstrong under the circumstances.

"If I'm promoting an Armstrong fight on Friday knowing that he would fight on the previous Monday, you'd have to wonder what would happen if he got cut or got knocked out," Peltz said. "In those days, fighters came into fights injured. In 1944, Bob Montgomery was looking to regain the lightweight title from Beau Jack, but promoter Mike Jacobs asked him to fight Al 'Bummy' Davis two weeks before that match, assuring him that he would get to fight Jack no matter



Armstrong fought 12 times in 1939, but such activity was not uncommon during that era.

what happened. Davis knocked Montgomery out in the first round, and I heard that Montgomery was walked around the outside of Madison Square Garden just to get his senses back. Jacobs was true to his word; not only did Montgomery fight Jack two weeks later, he regained the title. It was a different sport back then."

As expected, Armstrong made short work of the hopelessly outclassed Scott as a hook scored one knockdown in the first and a right polished him off at the 1:38 mark of Round 2. The short night at the office proved helpful, considering that Armstrong was to travel from Minneapolis to Seattle to face the 23-year-old Fontaine, who split bouts with Armstrong in 1936. Fontaine won the first meeting in February by 10-round decision, but Armstrong outpointed Fontaine over 10 rounds 34 days later.

Since then, Fontaine's form had eroded badly; he entered the October 20 rubber match inside the Civic Center in Seattle on a 1-4-2 skid, the last entry being a sixth-round TKO loss to "California" Jackie Wilson nearly three months earlier. With the title at stake, an inspired Fontaine, weighing 141, tore into the 139¾-pound Armstrong and managed to win the first round, but Armstrong's avalanche soon buried the challenger as he suffered five knockdowns in the second and three more in the third before referee Tommy Clark intervened.

"Henry didn't hurt me," said Fontaine, who turned pro at 15 and whose record dropped to 40-21-10 (15 KOs). "He just stunned me."

To this point, the only difficult parts of Armstrong's pursuit were the short time frames between fights and the miles he had to travel to fulfill his obligations. But Armstrong and his team knew they would need to up the competition for his next fight, which was to take place October 24 at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles.

"Not one of the first three fighters would have been sanctioned as a title challenger in an important boxing state like New York or California," Silver said. "They were in the twilight of long careers, and they were happy to get one last decent payday. The bouts amounted to little more than sparring matches for Armstrong. The (California) commission insisted on a live opponent. Jimmy Garrison was unrated at the time, but he was on the rise."

Compared to the other foes, the 27-year-old "Mud Flats Kid" was a more daunting proposition, as his 32-10-4 record benefitted from a five-fight winning streak. Like the other three, however, Garrison's KO ratio was low (seven KOs in 46 fights) and thus he lacked the pop to deter Armstrong's progress.

Although Armstrong floored Garrison in the eighth, he was unable to score his 68th knockout. Instead, as per California rules, Armstrong retained his title via 10-round decision as deemed by referee George Blake, the lone scoring official. Garrison lost three more fights (two by KO) to Armstrong between December 1939 and February 1944, the latter fight being his last.

The last member of "The Armstrong Five" was the 29-year-old Pacho, a rugged former contender from Yuma, Arizona, who had stuffed in 162 fights since May 1929 and had fought the likes of Battling Siki (L 10 in his 11th pro fight), Frankie Klick (L 10, D 8), Tod Morgan (W 10, KO 7), Ceferino Garcia (KO by 3, KO by 9, L 10, KO by 5; KO by 3 again in 1941), Barney Ross (L 10, L 12), Tony Canzoneri (L 10, L 10), Pedro Montanez (L 10), Fritzie Zivic (split L 10, L 10) and Armstrong himself in a welterweight title fight officiated by former heavyweight champion James J. Braddock in Havana seven months earlier. The Denver rematch on October 30 saw Armstrong, 140, halt the 146-pound Pacho in Round 4, the same round the first fight ended. It was Pacho's fourth straight loss, and in the following 25-plus months he went 6-15-2 (3 KOs) to bring his final record to 98-70-18 (48 KOs).

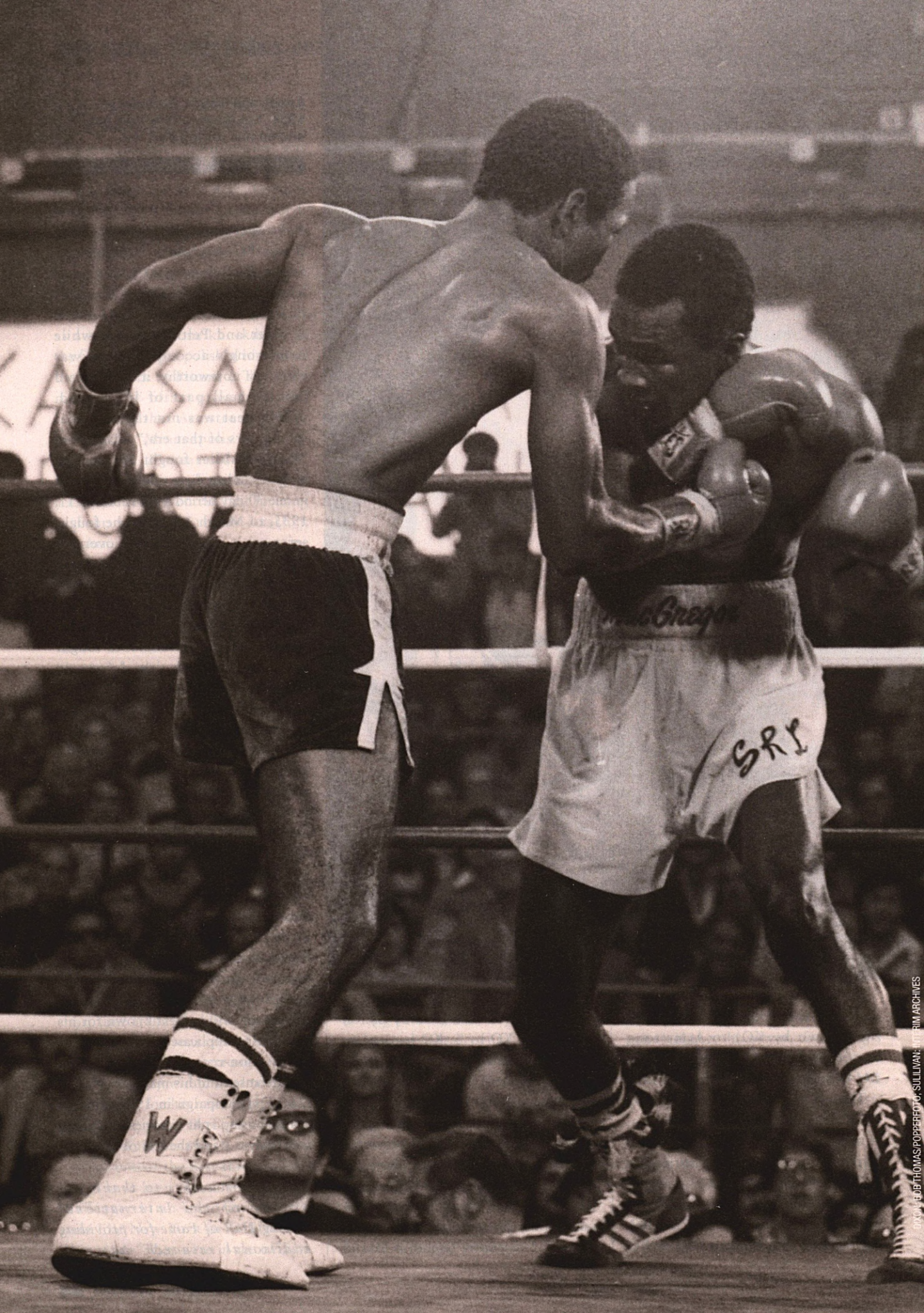
Silver and Peltz said that while Armstrong's accomplishment was certainly noteworthy, it represented just a small part of his legend.

"His feat was not that unusual for fighters of that era," Silver said. "Freddie Miller fought 35 times in 1935, including three title defenses, and in one 30-day period from February 11, 1935, to March 11, 1935, he fought seven main events, mostly overseas and all non-title bouts. In one 28-day stretch in 1936, he fought five times, including two title defenses. The prolific light heavyweight champion 'Slapsie' Maxie Rosenbloom fought 23 times with one title defense in 1931, and in 1932 he fought 31 times and had four title defenses. This is not meant to take anything away from Armstrong, who was a greater fighter than Miller and Rosenbloom; it's just to put things in perspective."

"Five title fights in a month is an incredible feat, but that's what guys did back then," said Peltz. "It's just part of (his story). Even though I don't like to declare anything more than a fighter is among the top 100 fighters of all time, if you put a gun to my head, Armstrong is one of the 10 greatest fighters to ever live. Just look at his record."

And what a record it is. While Armstrong will be best known for his never-to-be-duplicated "triple crown," his division-record 19 welterweight title defenses and his magnificent 27-0 (26 KOs) campaign in 1937, his five championship fight victories in 21 days will forever stand the test of time.

The author wishes to thank Jeff Brophy of the International Boxing Hall of Fame for providing additional research material.



BOXING: BOB THOMAS/POPPERFOTO; SULLIVAN: TIM ARCHIVES

WHEN ERAS COLLIDE

FORTY YEARS AGO, **SUGAR RAY LEONARD'S** DEFEAT OF **WILFRED BENITEZ** MARKED THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO EXTRAORDINARY DECADES AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW BRAND OF SUPERSTAR

By **Don Stradley**

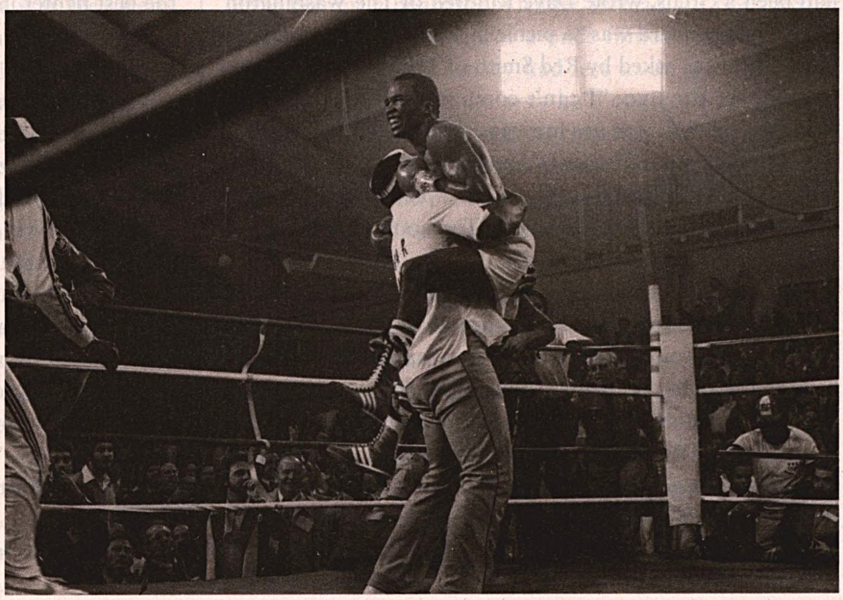
The left hook came out of nowhere, sharp and quick, with only 30 seconds remaining in the 15th and final round. It was thrown by the 23-year-old challenger, Sugar Ray Leonard, and grazed the temple of WBC welterweight titleholder Wilfred Benitez. For most of the round, they'd been head-to-head, ripping at each other with cruel liver punches and uppercuts. The hook surprised Benitez. His body wobbled before he fell to his knees.

It was the second time he'd been knocked down that evening. He popped back up immediately, shook his head, strolled away from referee Carlos Padilla and approximated the look of a man in control of his senses. The bout had been a tactical one, but both fighters wore the marks of a street brawl: Leonard's face was bruised, his lips swollen; Benitez's forehead was sliced down the middle, as if he'd been tapped with a small cleaver. Benitez took the eight count with his back to Padilla. He nodded at ringsiders, his white mouthpiece bared. Leonard leaned against a neutral corner. Sensing the fight was his, he smiled wearily.

It had been an intense contest, each round humming with a kind of pulsing danger. "From a technical standpoint," said Angelo Dundee, Leonard's adviser, at the press conference afterward, "there was more done in this fight than I've seen done for a long time."

Though it heralded the arrival of Leonard, the night he defeated Benitez didn't have the cachet of Sugar Ray's future bouts, nor did it yield memorable catchphrases like "No mas" or "You're blowing it, son." Yet, it was an event that had been hyped to the skies, an encounter between two massively talented future Hall of Famers, each aware that a single mistake could cost them the fight.

The 4,600 customers gathered that night in Las Vegas to witness the richest non-heavyweight bout up to that time – Leonard made $1 million, defending champion Benitez a shade more – had been lured into Caesars Palace like prospectors to a gold rush, all adding to the growing notion that Leonard was the new face of boxing. For a rare time in history, it appeared that the sport's biggest name was now a competitor far below the heavyweight class. "Once in a great while, a fighter comes along who changes all the numbers," said promoter Bob Arum. Indeed, Leonard had already earned a few million dollars without even



Ray Leonard proved to be more than a talented Olympic champ and media darling against Wilfredo Benitez.

fighting for a championship. Now, with Benitez bloody and stunned, it appeared Leonard was about to win his first professional title.

Benitez knew the bout was slipping away, so he'd come out for the 15th like a gunslinger. This wasn't his preferred way of doing things, but he began lashing at Leonard, holding his own until caught by Leonard's short left. In the second before Benitez fell, he looked up at Leonard. His face showed panic, confusion, disappointment. It was the sort of intimate moment that can happen in boxing but few other sports, when you can make eye contact with the person who has come to take away your livelihood. When Benitez rose, Padilla asked if he was OK. Benitez nodded. Padilla waved the fight on. Leonard rushed in, whipped a right lead. Benitez tilted his head just enough to make Leonard miss, but Leonard followed with a left uppercut that cracked against Benitez's face. The champion wavered. For the first time in the fight, if not his career, he seemed utterly without answers. The challenger threw three more punches, all missing. Had one of them landed, Benitez might've fallen out of the ring. Padilla moved in.

It was Friday night, November 30, 1979, 40 years ago, and Las Vegas was hosting not a mere changing of the guard, but the beginning of a significant new era. The 1970s were ending; the Ali epoch was fizzling out, and with it was going the politics, the anger and the grief of Vietnam. The 1980s, a time of greed and fun and glitz, were about to kick off. Though Leonard had won a gold medal at the 1976 Olympics, he was truly an athlete of the '80s, encapsulating much that those years would entail. Leonard was a new kind of fighter, glowing with business savvy as well as ring savvy. It became common to say Leonard would one day be CEO of a Wall Street firm.

He'd arrived in Las Vegas like a visiting raja as praise and speculation swirled. He posed for pictures with Cher and spoke earnestly to the press about his desire to be special. The general impression was that he was a refreshing character, something sorely needed in boxing. Ali's career had been a circus, wrote Dave Kindred of The Washington Post, while Leonard was "a picnic in the park." Dundee, Ali's old trainer, was asked by Red Smith of The New York Times to compare the two. "I can't compare him to Ali at 23," Dundee said. "Ali was too intricate, too many interests. This kid is home cookin'." Cus D'Amato, still a few years from unleashing Mike Tyson on the public, proclaimed Leonard "the best finisher since Joe Louis." The hoopla sounded like nothing less than a coronation.

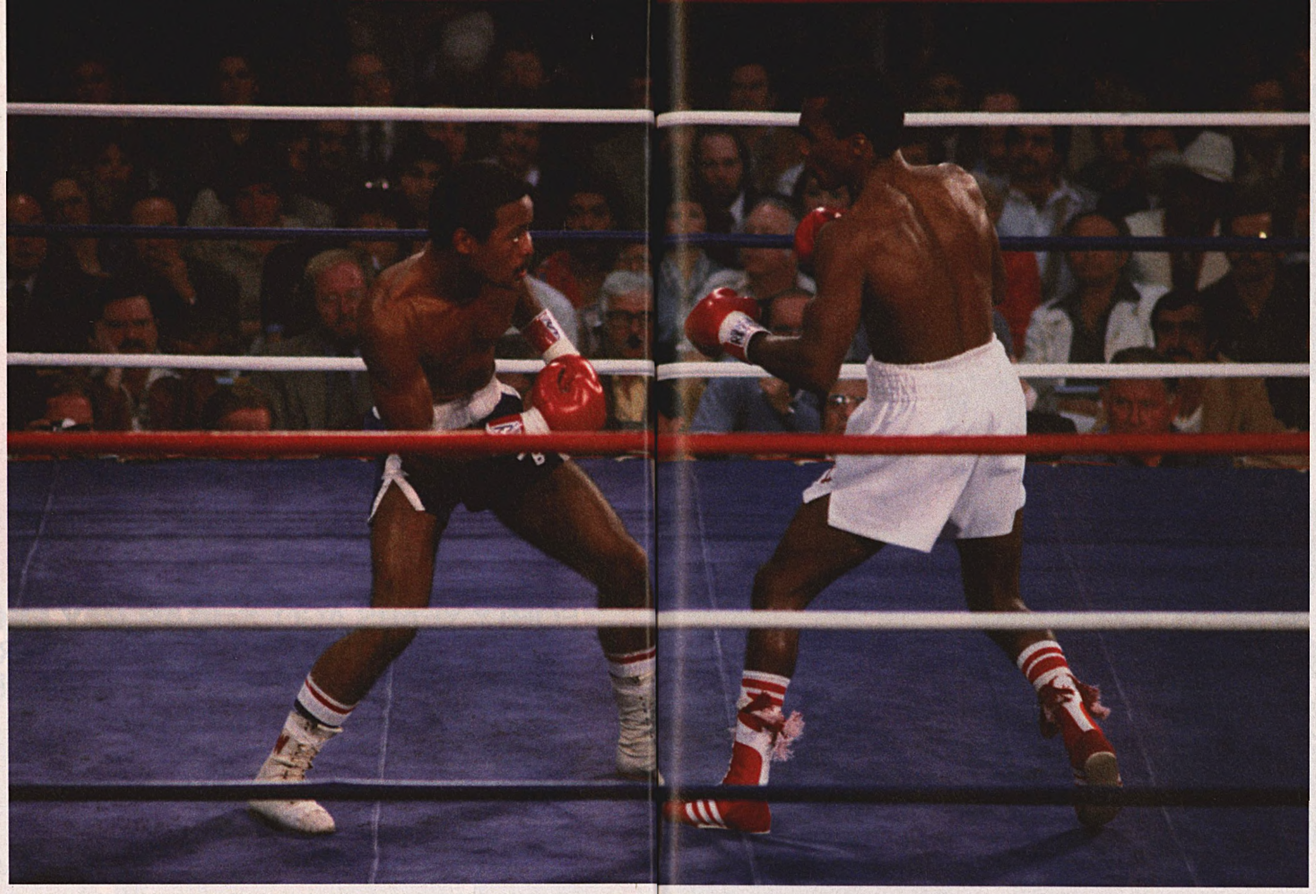
Because of his camera-ready grin, his articulate manner and the fact that he sometimes appeared in public wearing a yachting cap, some of Leonard's contemporaries dismissed him as a media creation. He was not. He was a fighter. But whether he was heralded or scrutinized, he remained a mystery. "Leonard is like a beautiful woman," said Benitez's manager, Jim Jacobs. "You never know what she is concealing. We'll know after this fight what Leonard may be hiding."

Benitez, meanwhile, had started his career as a wunderkind, a teen prodigy who won the WBA junior welterweight title at age 17 – he remains the youngest fighter to win a major boxing title, and his achievement is unlikely to be challenged – doing so against the revered Colombian star Antonio Cervantes. At 21, Benitez was Leonard's junior by two years but was already viewed in boxing circles as a sort of living legend. He was notorious for slacking off in the gym but was still able to outclass most opponents. Teddy Brenner, the Madison Square Garden matchmaker of the 1960s and '70s, would say of Benitez, "At one time he was the best fighter in the world." Still, Leonard was installed as a 3-1 betting favorite – strange, since he'd never even been past 10 rounds.

The oddsmakers may have been influenced by Benitez's ongoing trouble with his father and original manager, Gregorio. Benitez was puckish, impulsive and immature. He wanted independence, but he wasn't emotionally equipped to handle it. He'd been in a boxing bubble since he was 7 years old. Benitez hired Jacobs to manage him just before the Leonard bout. Jacobs was an enthusiastic boxing man but couldn't wrangle Benitez into the gym. Legend has it that Benitez trained no more than nine days for Leonard, the most high-profile opponent of his life.

Leonard, meanwhile, studied Wilfred's style and developed a nice strategy. "I would attack from every conceivable angle," he said later, "changing speeds the way a pitcher does on the mound."

And for the first few rounds, Leonard's game plan was perfect.



BETTMAN

The Benitez fight lacked the drama of Leonard's battles with Duran and Hearns, but it showed he could win a tactical match against a master craftsman.

After an intense mid-ring staredown, Leonard took control of the first round, rocking Benitez with a left hook followed by a right hand. Unable to land a follow-up, Leonard calmed down and went to work methodically – Ali had advised him before the bout to be serious, to not showboat – and in the third he landed a sudden jab that put Benitez on the seat of his trunks.

The quick knockdown motivated Benitez. In the fourth and fifth, he baffled Leonard with his own left jab – an evil, nasty thing that flicked like a switchblade. Leonard tried to fire back, but Benitez was elusive. This was the gleeful Benitez, the childlike genius who had left so many opponents swinging at nothing, the one known as "El Radar."

By the seventh, though, the momentum changed again. A clash of heads had left Benitez cut. Worse, his left hand was bothering him. Leonard stunned him in the ninth and punched his mouthpiece loose in the 11th, a feverish round where Leonard pinned Benitez on the ropes and pummeled him. The 12th, 13th and 14th were close, played out like a sort of fencing match between two master duelists. Leonard was up on the scorecards, but as the momentous 15th began, Dundee told him otherwise. It was, Dundee said, "a very, very close fight. Go out there and fight like an animal." As he'd do many times in the coming years, Leonard put on the razzle-dazzle finish.

How fierce the two of them were. Benitez ignored the soreness in his left hand and went after Leonard. Standing as flat-footed as Tony Galento in a New Jersey tavern, he put aside his cleverness and rumbled. In a way, it was Benitez's shining hour, right up to the time Padilla stepped in and ended the bout with only six seconds to go. "Maybe now," cried ABC's Howard Cosell, "they won't call Sugar Ray Leonard a hype!" As new champion Leonard leapt into the arms of his handlers, Benitez looked at Padilla with what the United Press called "a startled look of disbelief."

A blast of cheering followed, undercut by an ominous drone of booing. Many felt the stoppage was unnecessary and that Benitez had been denied the dignity of hearing the last bell. Benitez, having just experienced his first loss as a professional, didn't gripe. In the middle of the mayhem that broke out in the ring, the boxers embraced.

There were rumors in Las Vegas that Padilla stopped the fight because a certain gambler had wagered $50,000 that the bout would end by KO. The story held no water – Padilla could've stopped the bout in the 11th when Benitez was on the ropes and had lost his mouthpiece. Still, it wouldn't be the last time the cynics reared up after a Leonard fight.

That night, Leonard skipped his victory celebration and returned to his suite at Caesars. His body beaten to hell, he spent an hour soaking in a bathtub. His reflection in the bathroom mirror was ugly, haunting. Indeed, it was already a cliche to call him the next Ali. Yet, a less than devastating puncher like Benitez had left him aching in a bath. As he noted in his memoir, *The Big Fight*, Leonard thought about retiring. He wondered about brain damage.

Thus began "The Ray Leonard era," a period of roughly seven years where this boyish welterweight from Palmer Park, Maryland, would be boxing's greatest draw. Leonard never quite replaced Ali, though his career was dramatic and often inspiring. Outside of boxing, Leonard dabbled in television and promoting. To the surprise of some, he never became a boardroom leader. Instead, his post-boxing years have been typical of a once-famous fighter. For a while, it seemed his legacy had less to do with his fights and more to do with the way he'd controlled his career. Leonard showed future fighters that they didn't have to be at the mercy of managers and promoters. Not even Ali had enjoyed such control, and no fighter since Ray Robinson, the first "Sugar," had so unapologetically taken the reins of his destiny. But unlike some who have followed, Leonard almost always put on a good show. Looking back, his fights seem like small masterpieces, sporting events that bled over into the popular culture.

No one wept for Benitez that night in 1979. He was still young. But his future was grim. He quit boxing at 37 and ended up back in his homeland of Puerto Rico, enfeebled, under his mother's care. Leonard visited him some 30 years after their bout. Benitez was asked if he recognized the man in front of him.

"No," Benitez said. "But I know he beat me."

BLOODY SUCCESS

TYSON FURY'S BOLD TAKEOVER OF MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY WEEKEND RESULTED IN A DRAMATIC GORE-FEST AGAINST THE VERY GAME **OTTO WALLIN**

By **Tris Dixon**

Tyson Fury was all smiles and showmanship prior to his fight with Otto Wallin, but he had to get serious after suffering a gruesome cut in Round 3.

Blood coated the right side of Tyson Fury's face. He pawed at it and blinked awkwardly. He looked at trainer Ben Davison and said, "I love this shit."

His Mexican-themed red, white and green shorts were now mostly just red.

Jorge Capetillo, an unlikely hero who managed to just about get control of two cuts that together needed 47 stitches to seal, took many of the plaudits, but he was quick to share them with the man whose corner he worked against Swedish underdog Otto Wallin in Las Vegas.

"Gypsy King" Fury said he identified with the Mexicans he was in town to celebrate with on Mexican Independence Day weekend. He recognized the challenges they are currently facing and hoped they would identify with the giant outsider in Sin City.

"Tyson found a lot of sympathy from the Mexican people, and he felt sympathy for them as well, so it was a beautiful connection," said Capetillo. "The fight was tremendous. There was drama. He put everything on the line. He showed his bravery, pushed the fight and the people responded very well, and the Mexicans were happy because he put on a show."

For a bout between a Brit and a Swede in the United States on Mexican Independence Day weekend, well, it was a rather odd concoction. But it somehow worked.

Fury, as you'd expect, played a significant role in that. He'd morphed from the stars and stripes of Apollo Creed against Tom Schwarz in June to the red, white and green of "El Rey Gitanos" (the Gypsy King). He wore a lucha libre mask to his open workout on Tuesday and another to the public weigh-in on Friday.

The publicity machine saw more than 8,000 create a vibrant atmosphere in the T-Mobile Arena.

But things were not perfect in the buildup. During fight week, Davison admitted preparation had been better for Schwarz. It wasn't the usual "best training camp ever" spiel from the trainer.

Then came a hard night in the office against the brave and ambitious Wallin.

Fury fans who believed their lineal champion would coast to victory quickly looked for someone to blame. Davison found himself in the crosshairs of Tyson's father, John, a pundit on BT Sport's fight night coverage.

John Fury called for the axe to fall on the young trainer, who is credited with bringing Tyson back from the brink, from weighing more than 400 pounds, depressed, living hard and fast and being on the brink of suicide.

Wallin had not managed to do what his compatriot Ingemar Johansson did in 1959 when he upset Floyd Patterson in New York's Yankee Stadium, but he had surpassed expectations. He did trainer Joey Gamache proud, and he received a hero's welcome back home, where he was plastered all over the papers and featured on peak radio and primetime TV shows. »

BLOODY SUCCESS

Promoter Dmitriy Salita said Wallin had staked a claim as one of the best heavyweights in the world.

Maybe so. The cynics will just say he boxed out of his skin against a demotivated Fury who was looking beyond him at the penciled-in February 22 return date with Deontay Wilder.

But Wallin played a significant part in turning another victory parade into an unexpectedly dramatic evening of bloody violence. He did that with his gloves. It was his punches that turned Fury's face into a crimson mask, not a flailing elbow, a clash of heads or a brush with good fortune. Sure, he lost fans for needlessly waving his glove into Fury's wounds to exacerbate the cuts, a quite unnecessary maneuver for which he was fortunate not to be docked a point by blood-splattered referee Tony Weeks. Other than that, he was flawless all week. He was affable, readily available for the media, and then he dished up 12 gory rounds. His options will be plentiful moving forward.

Fury seemed to be gradually finding his groove before the cut changed the dynamic of the fight.

"I am very proud of Otto for making the step up and giving the 'Gypsy King' a hard fight," said Gamache, who stated that the Swede would take some time off and rest before making his next move. "I thought the fight should have been stopped because of the bad cut; I wasn't aware it was caused by a punch.

"Regarding the world scene (moving forward), be patient. Otto showed he has the potential to become heavyweight champion of the world."

For Fury, there will be a holding period while his wounds heal.

Cutman Capetillo went to wish Tyson well the following morning and was given a cash bonus for his efforts – for keeping Tyson in the fight.

"That is the worst cut I have ever worked and I have ever seen in my career," Capetillo explained. "We are talking about a two-inch cut, deep and wide, and I was just doing my best, trying to control the bleeding.

"When I heard Joe (Gamache) sending Otto to work on the cut, to scratch it, to punch it, I knew I had to do something to stop it getting worse; that was my main goal."

Part of the eyelid was sliced open and there was an ugly, arcing gash across Fury's eyebrow. Capetillo was reprimanded by ringsiders for using too much Vaseline, but he said that as long as he saw Team Wallin trying to extend the rules, he would do his part in defense of his man, too.

"I used a lot because you could see (Wallin) was picking at the eye, punching, rubbing it, so I said to the commissioner, 'If the referee doesn't say anything, I'm going to take advantage,'" Capetillo said. "You've got to do what you've got to do, so it was a matter of putting on Vaseline to try and make it slippery, to hide the cut and make sure that he didn't open it wider."

Team Fury flew into a united rage when the 28-year-old challenger tried something beyond the rules, but as fighting men they also appreciated that he was trying to get any edge he could, and there were no hard feelings afterward.

"He was looking sharp and strong. You've got to give credit to Otto; he was undefeated, well-prepared, young, a southpaw," Capetillo continued. "And sometimes it depends on the style, and we had to change the game plan. But Tyson made adjustments, and we got through and we got the win."

Wallin was undaunted by the challenge and emboldened by the blood. He took a real beating in Round 11 but fought back and stunned Fury in the 12th. This was no parade, no exhibition, no procession to a bigger event. It was a fight – on that you can make no mistake.

And when the ESPN crew controversially made Fury's corner aware that the cuts had been caused by legitimate punches in Round 3 rather than a head clash, the onus was on Capetillo to keep Tyson in the contest. Anything under four rounds would be ruled a no-contest. After Round 4, a cut caused by a head clash would have seen the fight go to the scorecards. If it was halted after four and the blood had been caused by punches, the winner would have been the man who inflicted the damage.

Capetillo, who by the end had used a whole bottle of adrenaline, did his part. Fury did his, too.

"Job done," said trainer Davison after the dust had settled and he'd returned to the U.K. "I've watched the fight back a few times and I've just watched the first three rounds back, and it was pretty much going as I expected until the cut, which is obviously going to have a massive effect. But the first round, Tyson had a look, tried to find his rhythm, tried to find his timing, tried to make Otto fall short. He did that. Second round, he started landing a few telling shots. Third round, he started finding his distance and was landing a few more telling shots, and the way I expected the fight to go was for that to increase more and more as it went on. Then the cut happened, and it changed things up a bit."

The 12-round struggle meant the critics initially came out in force, though Davison said they were placated when BT Sport's gritty "corner-cam" footage was released a week later, showing his advice and behavior in-between rounds.

But he'd not taken it personally anyway. There's always someone to blame.

"Lennox Lewis didn't look a million dollars every time he got in the ring. Neither did Muhammad Ali," Davison added. "But they often came out with a win, and Tyson has done every time so far. So I don't think it was that bad."

Fury has since been helping amateurs at a local club, and Davison said that while they both admit they have plenty to work on, they were content with the performance. The trainer might now seek the services of Dr. Pearlman Hicks, who treated Vitali Klitschko after he'd been through the Lennox Lewis shredder in June 2003. Klitschko took six months off, but the damage was not a factor as his decorated career continued.

Yet it remains to be seen whether Wilder II is next in Fury's future. Davison is not convinced.

For starters, Wilder has to get beyond Luis Ortiz first. Then, on December 7, Andy Ruiz Jr. defends his titles in a rematch against Anthony Joshua. If Wilder keeps his options open, then an all-PBC clash with Ruiz, should he win, would surely be a priority – for all the belts. There are plenty of attractive matches at heavyweight, but there are multiple moving parts and no easy deals.

That said, Wilder did confess that all eyes would be on Fury's damaged skin, should they get back in with one another.

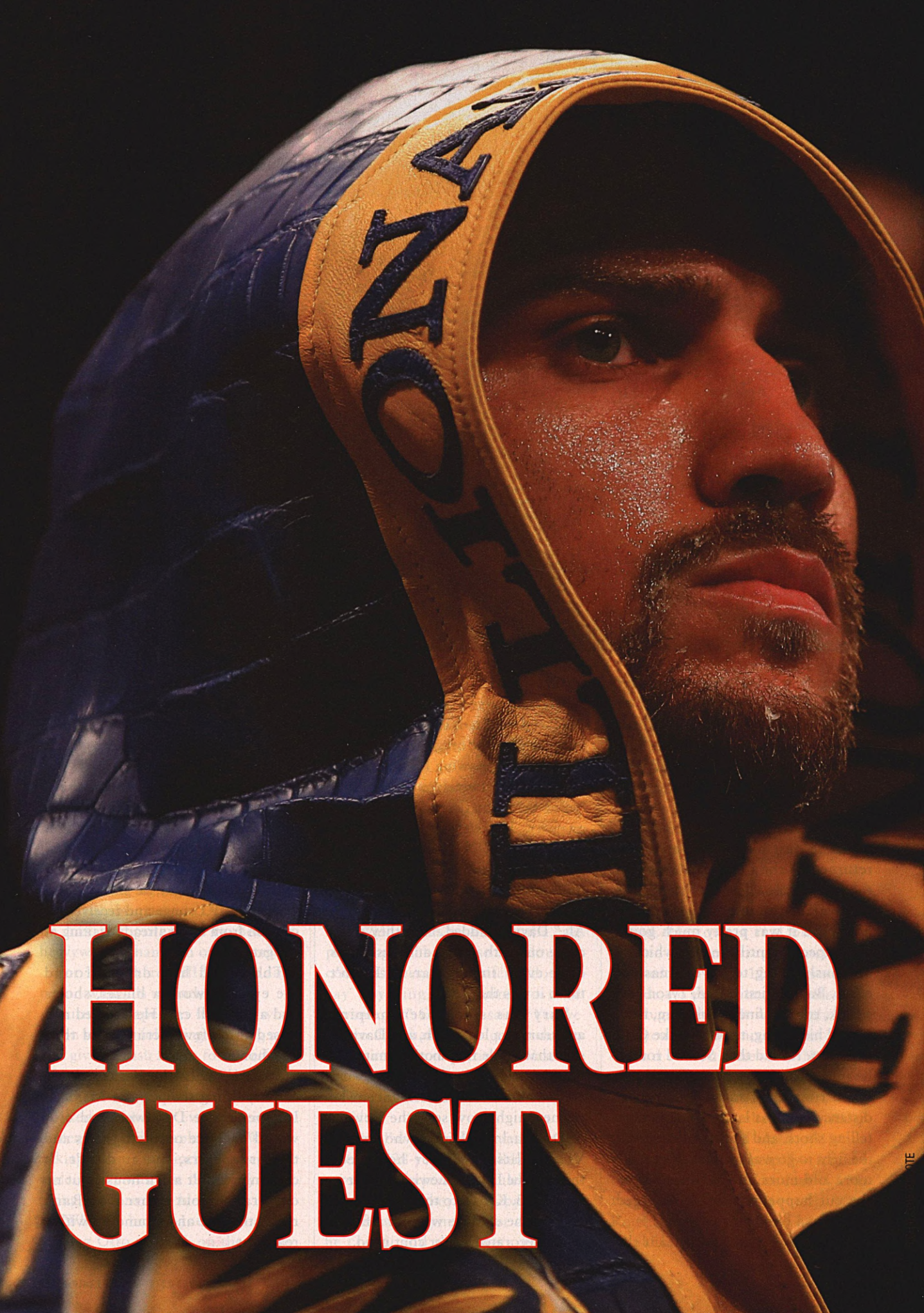
"No matter what he does, when he fights me, (the cut) is going to open right back up," Wilder told ThaBoxingVoice. "I'm going to pop it right back open. He can get plastic surgery, duct tape or staples, super glue or hot glue, cement glue ... shit, he can go get some of that flex glue. It ain't even going to matter."

It will be a target. It will be a concern. But that's all in the future.

As Tyson went to board his flight back to Manchester on Sunday morning from McCarran's Terminal 3, leaving Las Vegas, he strode down from the VIP Lounge and received an ovation from those already waiting at the gate.

The blood had dried around the eye. He wore a blazer, shorts and a baseball cap. He stopped and posed for a few pictures and then flew home.

Some thought the Vegas gamble of Fury filling the popular Mexican Independence Day weekend slot would backfire on the fighters and the organizers, but it didn't. It certainly wasn't a full house, but no one crapped out either. Top Rank rolled the dice and wound up with a real fight.



HONORED GUEST

U.K. BOXING FANS WERE MORE THAN HAPPY FOR THE CHANCE TO SEE **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** IN ACTION, EVEN IF IT MEANT A LOSS FOR **LUKE CAMPBELL**

By **Gareth A Davies**

We can safely accuse Vasiliy Lomachenko of being a perfectionist. The Ring lightweight champion from Ukraine ventured to give himself just a seven out of 10 for his retention of the WBA and WBO belts while laying claim to the vacant WBC strap in an utterly compelling technical contest against Britain's Luke Campbell in London's Docklands. Forget the seven. Not only did Lomachenko conquer Campbell, but he also came, saw and conquered the diehard boxing aficionados of these isles during a week in which the British fans gave "The Matrix" a perfect, resounding 10 out of 10.

That adulation came not just at the sonorous O2 Arena, but from the very beginning of the fight week activities in the famous York Hall of East London all the way until the master boxer was awarded the championship fight by 119-108 on two of the cards and 118-109 on the third. In fairness to Campbell, written off in all quarters going into the contest, it was closer than that, with many of the rounds competitive. Yet the wizardry Lomachenko conjures with his Cossack-inspired, gymnastic dance moves and bag of mainly left-handed tricks persuades judges over and over to give him the nod, round after round.

Campbell merits high praise for doing what others – namely Jorge Linares, Guillermo Rigondeaux and Nicholas Walters – were unable to do, that is withstanding the will-breaking skills Loma brings. Badly hurt at the end of the fifth and down in the 11th, Campbell, a tough character from the North Sea city of Hull with soldiers and trawlermen in his family, ably displayed with his own precision and effort why he is the most decorated amateur in British boxing history. Not since the Olympics in 2012 – when both Lomachenko and Campbell earned stripes of gold in the lightweight and bantamweight classes, respectively – had a British crowd cheered so loudly for an overseas fighter as the Ukrainian made his way to the ring. His countrymen Wladimir Klitschko and Aleksandr Usyk were here, too, by the way. Both were given applause to warm the arena.

Part of the entourage, like a wizened conductor leading a philharmonic orchestra, was Bob Arum. The veteran show guy certainly knows how to polish the gem he has under his promotional direction. The "Loma Show" will be a global thing, he explained. London was just the start.

"There are people who want to watch Loma around the world," said Bob. "Muhammad Ali was my

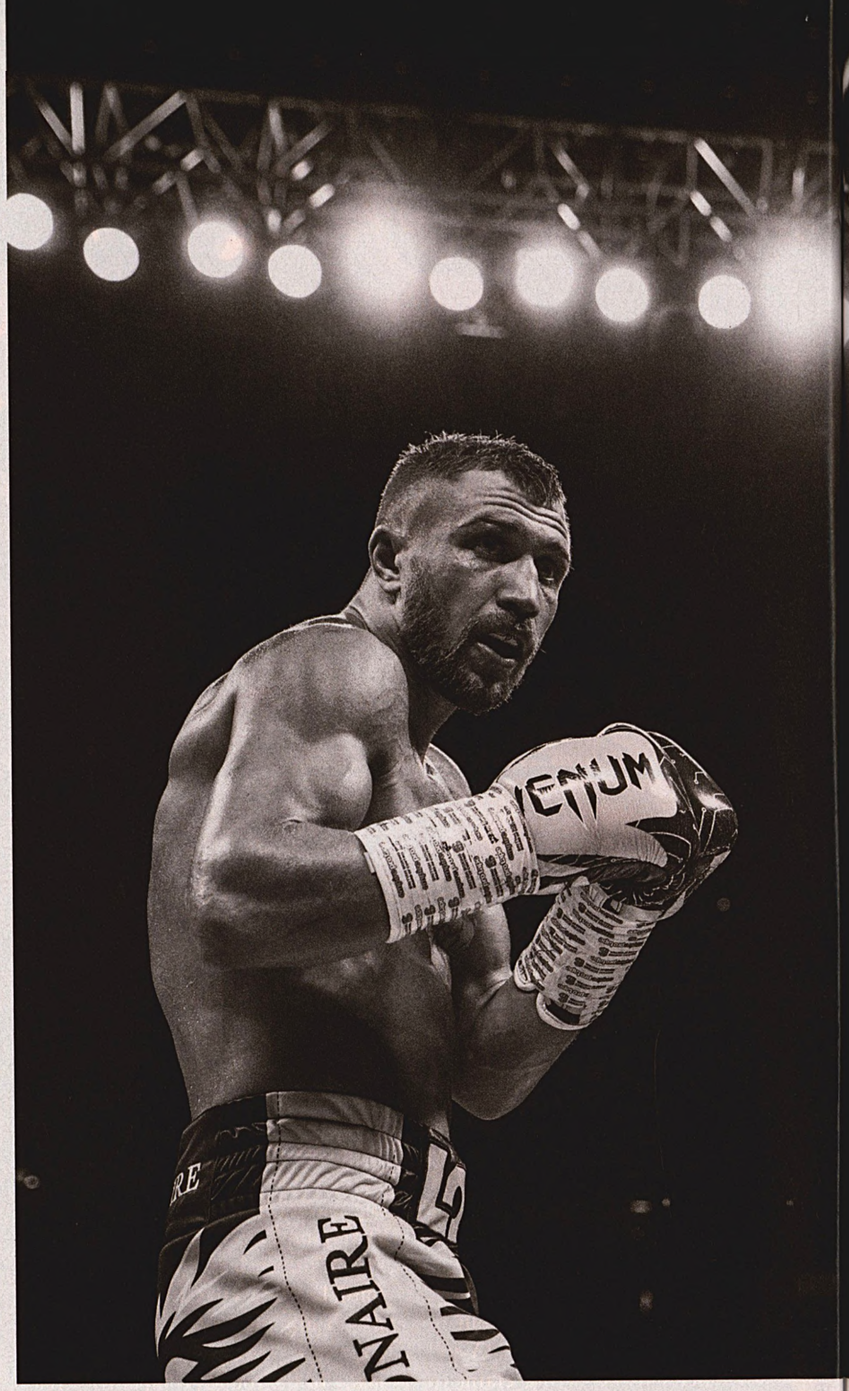
mentor, and he taught me if you're going to be a global superstar in boxing, you have to fight all over the world. You can't stay in the United States or any one country. Mine and Loma's goal is to fight all around the world, because there's a tremendous sports market for him. With Ali, we fought him the U.K., Germany, Japan, Philippines, Switzerland – all over the world. That's what a world champion has to do to be a superstar, in my opinion. And I think that's what Loma is doing."

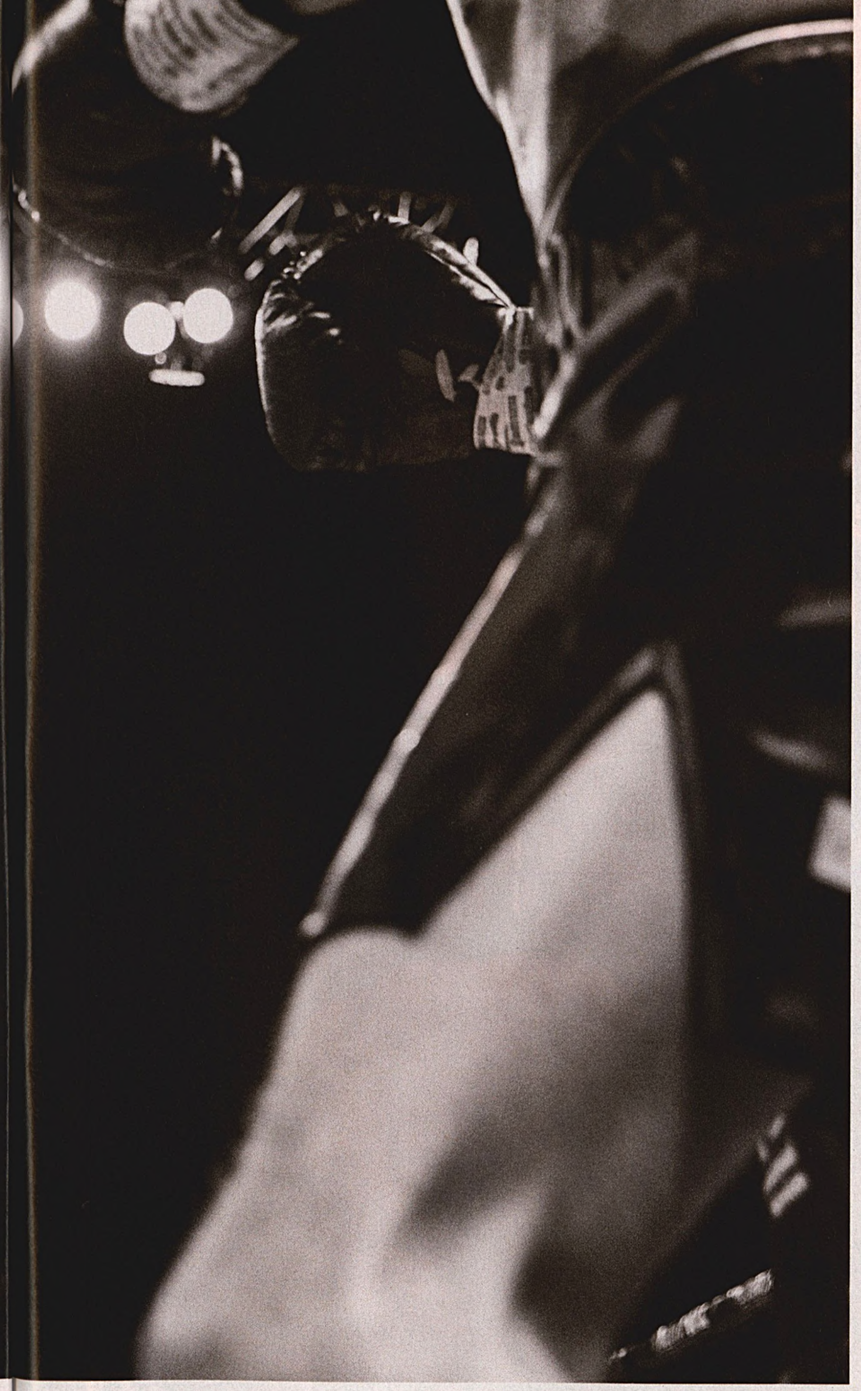
Arum relayed, moreover, that Lomachenko has reached the limit of his physical aspirations at 135 pounds. "I don't make weight decisions. We have one genius in this group and that's his father. He is the smartest person boxing-wise I have ever met. He really understands the sport and he understands his son. That's the truth. It's not me who makes the decisions, it's his father.

"Our dream for Lomachenko is to be like Henry Armstrong," Arum went on. "For him to fight in all three divisions simultaneously, not only unify this division. We'll do that sometime next year. Fight the best fighters at 135 pounds, 130 pounds and 126 pounds. You can see the size of a normal lightweight is represented by Luke Campbell. Vasiliy is a much smaller guy."

Arum is correct there, but the great fights for Lomachenko are at 135 pounds: Richard Commey, Teofimo Lopez, Devin Haney. Two out of three won't be bad in the next 12 months.

But a little more on the Loma-Campbell dance, for the record: They battled the first three rounds like an Olympic final, the champion bobbing and weaving, Campbell moving smartly to take center ring and search for openings – confident, at home, proud as the fight became a tussle for ascendancy. Campbell kept up a ferocious pace as Lomachenko stepped up his attacks in the fourth, beginning his assaults on the body, his most telling punches of this championship fight.





Lomachenko pleased British fans during his London appearance. Bob Arum says more countries outside the U.S. will follow.

Indeed, 56 of Loma's 211 landed punches (27 percent) were body shots, the major difference in the fight. Only 18 percent of Loma's landed punches in his previous 13 fights had been body shots. According to CompuBox punch stats from the fight, Lomachenko pulled away in the second half, outlanding Campbell 140-73 in rounds 7-12.

In the 11th, Campbell was down from a left to the body and a short, straight right, counted by referee Victor Laughlin. But the Briton battled gamely to the end. Campbell was comprehensively beaten on the cards but never embarrassed.

As Lomachenko himself had predicted, it was going to be "a highest-level amateur-style fight – with knockdowns." So it proved.

A few days later, Campbell spoke to me about his pain, the hurt. But it was emotional, mental rather than physical, in spite of the fact he was taken to the hospital immediately after the fight on precautionary grounds.

"Pride. It's that which hurts most. I don't like losing. That's the hardest thing. I'm in this to win," explained Campbell, defiance still in his voice, as if he were ready to step in for another 12 rounds. "When it doesn't go your way, it's the most upsetting part. The feeling eventually goes. I'm not going to dwell on it. I was in there with a very good fighter, the pound-for-pound number one. There's things in my performance that I know I can improve on and get better, that's for sure."

Campbell had watched the fight on his own, 48 hours later. "I watched it at 1:30 a.m.; I couldn't sleep. My performance was all right. It's always hard when the guy in front of you is so cool."

He added: "People were saying he was going through the gears and he did, but that's down to me. I wouldn't let him go up. Usually you see him become more relentless as the fight goes on. He usually does showboating, but he couldn't do that against me. I was there stopping him at every point. The destination is still the same, though: I will be champion. Mark my words. I will be champion. Truth is, though, I don't want to be just a champion. I want to be one of the elite champions."

Overall, the event marked a moment in time. Boxing has been on the rise since the 2012 Olympic Games in this country, and Lomachenko was a part of that. He acknowledged after the contest what it meant to have the support of British fans. Little wonder the Ukrainian had shown his circus skills, juggling, and carried himself with a broad smile and a skip in his step all week. It must have felt as if London were his hometown. For one night, or perhaps the entire week, it really was that. Lomachenko and London really do gel as dance partners.

"Thank you all for coming here to support. The British boxing fans are the best in the world," he said in his lilting English. Arum raised his hands and clapped. Campbell's promoter, Eddie Hearn, beamed. Some praise from one of the greatest boxers we have ever witnessed on these shores, from Muhammad Ali to Marvin Hagler et al. It will live long in the memory. RING

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for the London Telegraph.

EVER FORWARD

TRAILBLAZING VETERAN **JACKIE NAVA** ISN'T ONE TO LOWER HER AMBITIONS AS SHE APPROACHES RETIREMENT

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Jackie Nava says that the end is near for her storied career in the ring, but there's no chance that the 39-year-old will be slowing down.

Why start now? It would be out of character for someone who has not just won world titles at 122 and 118 pounds over the course of a 35-4-4 (16 KOs) run as a pro boxer, but also operates her own gym, has a sports brand (JN) in the works and even served as a federal deputy for the Mexican Congress. That's not to mention being a wife and mother to two daughters.

Did we forget the running, which includes several half-marathons and full marathons in Mexicali and San Diego?

"I always try to organize my time," she said. "I take advantage of every moment when I exercise, when I am with my daughters and when I have meetings. It has been a year since I finished as a federal deputy, but I always take every moment to work."

It's an exhausting schedule, but one that has created a life full of accomplishments few could claim, both in and out of the ring. With the International Boxing Hall of Fame beginning to induct female fighters in 2020, Nava will be a no-brainer pick once she retires. But she refuses to look back.

"I am always looking forward," she said. "What I do know is that it has been a life of work, effort, much discipline and success, but also failures which have made me grow not only in sport, but also as a person."

Yet no matter what happens in the future, at her core, Nava will always be a fighter. It was her life even before she turned pro as a boxer at 21 in 2001, and she never gave it up.

"Quite frankly, I knew that I wanted to go far," said Nava, who also competed briefly as a pro kickboxer. "I started in 2001, when I barely heard talk about women's boxing. So I really focused on learning the technique, doing it the best I could, and my first goal was to draw the attention of promoters and the media. Apparently, it was achieved, (laughs) but the rest was done alone. It was a process of hard work and many days of frustration due to a lack of support, but we always found a positive path."

A fan of Mexican great Ricardo "Finito" Lopez, Nava also found an ally in another of the sport's legends, Erik Morales, who managed her for a time. Yet even with such powerful friends, she had to perform in the ring, and as soon as she picked up 118-pound and 122-pound world titles in successive fights in 2005, becoming the WBC's first female world champion in the process, it was clear that Tijuana's "La Princesa Azteca" was a special fighter.

'IT HAS BEEN A LIFE OF WORK, EFFORT, MUCH DISCIPLINE AND SUCCESS, BUT ALSO FAILURES WHICH HAVE MADE ME GROW.'

It wasn't just the wins over the likes of Leona Brown, Kelsey Jeffries, Yazmin Rivas, Jennifer Salinas and Edith Matthysse that earned her praise; it was the way she fought. Like all the great Mexican fighters, Nava threw punches, engaged and had the power to end a bout suddenly and emphatically. So while there were several standouts from the nation that made it to the pound-for-pound list, Nava cemented her place on the top of the heap.

"It is always very nice to hear that, and it's very motivating to listen to the girls who practice boxing and make reference to the 'Aztec Princess,'" said Nava, whose dramatic success in world title bouts helped put female boxing on the map in her home country – not an easy task.

"Little by little, we have been making ground, and now with mixed martial arts, we have more exposure, but we still have a ways to go."

Nava made a huge dent in the market, though, headlining shows and garnering significant television exposure. She opened doors that her peers eagerly marched through when Nava took breaks from the ring to give birth to her daughters.

Since returning to active duty in 2017, she won three straight over Ana Maria Lozano, Alys Sanchez and Carolina Alvarez. In her most recent bout, in May, Nava fought to a 10-round draw with old rival Marcela Eliana Acuna, who defeated her in 2009, and she expected that this September was going to result in the long-awaited and long-delayed superfight with fellow Mexican star Mariana Juarez. But at press time it was not to be, and Nava is still waiting for a fight that would captivate fans not just at home, but internationally.

"I hope it can happen this year," said Nava. "It could be (the biggest fight in the history of women's boxing); people have waited for it and the styles are attractive, so hopefully it will be made concrete."

A fight with Juarez would be the perfect way to end a memorable career, a testament to the power of persistence and an example to young people in Mexico and abroad that yes, anything is possible.

"It is precisely a topic that I try to convey in my lectures, and I talk about the fears that may exist, what stops you and what keeps you from taking the next step," Nava said. "It is important to tell them that we are human beings and that fear is natural, but that if you learn to live with it and you take risks to do what you want to do, it can be achieved."

Nava already has Hall of Fame-worthy credentials but isn't done yet.

ENTER THE OCTAGON

BY GARETH A DAVIES

No hard feelings after Justin Gaethje (right) KO'd Donald Cerrone in the opening round.

GAETHJE A TALENT TO TREASURE

Justin Gaethje has one of the biggest hearts in MMA, both inside and outside of the Octagon. Not only is he a fan-pleasing fighter extraordinaire (the American is pound-for-pound among the most entertaining, ball-busting fighters in the sport), he is also just a good egg; I've long admired his character since he joined the UFC after a run as champion in the World Series of Fighting. Gaethje put in another typically rumbustious performance to claim victory in the headliner against his popular opponent, Donald "Cowboy" Cerrone, in Vancouver in mid-September, winning by knockout in the opening round. Gaethje, by the way, has formidable wins against Edson Barbosa and a couple of wars he was on the wrong end of against Dustin Poirier and Eddie Alvarez. But it is Gaethje's pursuits outside the fighting arena and where he comes from that present an intriguing comparison to the fist-and-feet fighting that the 30-year-old lightweight (155 pounds in MMA) is so addicted to the thrill of.

Get this: "I grew up in a little town called Safford (in Arizona), which has like 10,000 people. It's so secluded, too. We have a Walmart and then nothing other than a Walmart. You have to drive like two hours to get to a city. Copper mining is the main source of jobs there," he explained, adding that it is the main reason people live there. His twin brother, Marcus, and his father, John, work at the copper mine. Justin worked there for one summer. "I had a job where I worked seven days a week for 12 hours and then an hour driving back and forth from home. I did it for three months straight and took one sick day. That was a crazy experience. They work hard."

His job was called "the shovel." "It has a scoop, and it picks up the dirt and then it dumps it in the dump truck. It's like the biggest dump truck you've seen in your life. The mine itself is as big as you can imagine. It's huge. You can't look at it and see the whole thing. You'd have to have an aerial view to see it. It's probably 2,000 feet to the bottom of the pit. It's a huge open pit. My father and his father worked the mine. There was a strike back in the early '80s, and my grandpa was on strike and my dad crossed the line and went to work on the mine when he was 18. He started at a crazy time. He worked his way up, and now he's a supervisor. He never went to college, but he's at a college-level position, and he's really respected throughout the entire mine. My twin is a shovel mechanic, so whenever a shovel breaks down, he goes and fixes it. He's part of a crew."

His father is German, his mother Mexican. The family voted that Justin ought to go to college. So he did, in Colorado, graduating with a degree in human sciences (and doing a ton of wrestling, which is where the love of fighting started). Once the fighting is done, he plans to become a youth worker. "Helping people is pretty rewarding. It makes you happy, for one, and, for two, I had the greatest parents a kid could ask for. Not everyone gets that lucky. I have a couple of friends who didn't have that same positive influence in their life. If I can use this platform I have now to get through to the

youth, that would be great. Just following my dream was a big thing where I come from, a big thing for the kids. I'm an inspiration right now to every kid that lives there. It's a good feeling."

★ ★ ★

BOTTLE-THROWING DISGRACE AT UFC MEXICO

I write as Mr. Disgusted in the wake of UFC Mexico events recently. We know how boxing – along with association soccer – is the most popular sport in Mexico, which has as decorated a stable of elite boxers on its record books as any country in the world. Yet the behavior of fans at the main event between Yair Rodriguez and Jeremy Stephens was as bad as anything seen anywhere in the world in the history of MMA. The UFC Mexico headliner ended inside 15 seconds when an eye poke from Rodriguez left Stephens unable to continue, with referee Herb Dean having called off the fight after giving Stephens the statutory five minutes to recover, resulting in a no-contest. "El Pantera" (the Panther), the Mexican hero, was incensed by the outcome, his petulance hardly helping sate the crowd as bottles rained in on Stephens and officials in the ring.

Stephens and his team had to be shielded physically by a phalanx of security people as bottles and plastic beer containers were hurled by dozens of spectators. Even the broadcast team had to take cover under tables. These things happen in fight sports from time to time, and it is disappointing. Yet this is not the behavior of MMA fans. Or indeed sports fans. They are the actions of hooligans who have no respect for martial arts, or indeed the protagonists themselves. The rivalry between the two fighters, by all accounts, did not end in the Octagon. According to Stephens, he almost came to blows with Rodriguez after the event in a hotel, where he was verbally challenged by Rodriguez, whom he pushed.

"They filmed it," Stephens – a fan favorite for his incredible comebacks in fights – said a few days later. "But there is no way they will put it out on social media, because he acted like a pussy at the hotel. I thought he was trying to be a gentleman; unfortunately, that wasn't it."

Stephens, known as "Lil' Heathen," told ESPN on his return to the United States, "He wants to talk and say anything? I don't know Yair, he doesn't know me, but I'm not like that. I'm not gonna let you come up and talk shit, especially after you eye-poked me."

★ ★ ★

RUGBY STAR JAMES HASKELL JOINS BELLATOR

Heavyweight athletes Brock Lesnar and Jack Swagger joined the UFC and Bellator respectively from the WWE. They wanted to try the real thing. England rugby star James Haskell retired from the physical battering in club and international rugby six months ago, aged 34, after 17 years in the thick of it. But the hulking back-row forward, 6-foot-4 and 260 pounds, now wants to pit himself – in the cage – against heavyweight fighters. Make no mistake: He knows what he is getting into. I've known Haskell for many years, have worked with him on MMA shows on television, and his interest and knowledge are deep. Haskell has used the grappling art of jiu-jitsu as part of his rugby training, admitting that it helped in positioning himself to steal the ball. But now it's time for the real thing.

"There are people that can fold you up like a travel mat at the gym in this sport. But I'm already taking this deadly seriously," he explained. "I'm going to find out the hard way if I'm tough enough to be a fighter for real."

Haskell, a real character and as game as they come, will make this a fascinating journey.

Gareth A Davies is MMA Correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph.

James Haskell hung up his rugby boots and will now try his hand at mixed martial arts.

WORLD BEAT

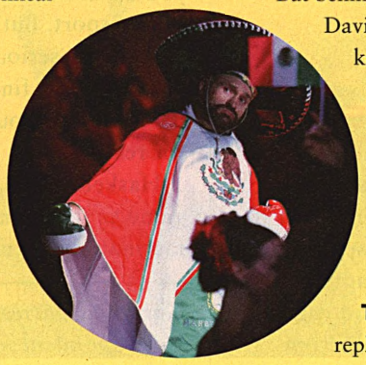
U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

Much has been written by the sages and soothsayers looking into their crystal balls since the favored son of ESPN, 6-foot-9 Tyson Fury, stepped over the ropes for a second time in Las Vegas, this time against Otto Wallin, the Swede they said had little hope of dethroning the "Gypsy King" for the "lineal championship."

But it was not vintage Fury. Alarm bells will be ringing in the knowledgeable circles around The Ring's No. 1-rated heavyweight. In spite of his "winning ugly" over 12 rounds with claret gushing down his face from that gruesome double gash above his right eye, this was a worrying last tune-up fight for the blockbuster rematch with WBC titleholder Deontay Wilder next year. Fury prides himself on honesty, and his father, John – a former professional heavyweight boxer and bare-knuckle fighter – weighed in powerfully and hastily on the broadcast back in the U.K. that his son "looked as weak as a kitten."

It was hyperbole in a sport which thrives on hype, but there were truths in it. Wallin took – or rather managed to soak up – six rounds of heavy punishment from Fury from rounds 6 to 11 before battling back in the 12th to trouble the still-undefeated former unified champ. The fight's storylines focused on Fury's one-eyed comeback, his ability to smother Wallin, yet we saw a lack of snap and power in Fury's attacks, his timing off, and even his defense unusually leaky.



Fury became "El Rey Gitano" for September 14.

Wallin, ranked in the top 10 by two of the world sanctioning bodies, ought in reality to have given Fury few problems. But he lasted 12 rounds with the Briton, who weighed his lightest since he fought Wladimir Klitschko just under four years ago on the night he broke Klitschko's near-decade of supremacy. The cuts will need to heal, and that may extend well beyond the February 22 date that has been tabbed as showdown day.

But behind the scenes, trainer Ben Davison and Fury himself will know he needs to be at his sharpest for the "Bronze Bomber" the second time around. Davison knows it; Fury knows it.

★★★

The first time an instant replay from television has been used to reverse a decision in a world title fight took place at the O2 Arena in London on the undercard of the lightweight duel between Ring champion Vasiliy Lomachenko and Luke Campbell on August 31. It involved London's Charlie Edwards, who was making a defense of his WBC flyweight title against Julio Cesar Martinez. The champion was clearly hurt and went to the ground after a ferocious body assault in the third round from the Mexican challenger, who looked a real handful. Just as he had been, indeed, in stopping Andrew Selby, brother of former featherweight beltholder Lee Selby, earlier this year. That fifth-round stoppage was by dint of a ferocious body shot, too.

Mark Lyson, the referee, had counted Edwards out and called the fight over, after which television replays showed clearly that the defending beltholder had been punched to the ribs by an overzealous left hand from the challenger when Edwards was already on his knees.

Mauricio Sulaiman, president of the WBC, who was ringside, explained that it was "obvious a decision needed to be made" and that "after consulting briefly with the WBC supervisory team" turned the decision over and said there would be a rematch. He even acted as translator, briefly, for Martinez in the broadcast on Sky Box Office. "We have done it before, and many other sports do this, so why shouldn't we?" said Sulaiman.

Although the British Boxing Board of Control made no complaints about the decision, there is no provision in place under their rules for replays to be used. In the end, common sense prevailed. An immediate rematch has been ordered, but it would be no surprise to see Edwards move up to junior bantamweight, as he has been suggesting it is a struggle making 112 pounds.

★★★

Should a boxer return from retirement after more than two decades away? Nigel Benn announced his return to a boxing ring early in the fall, but the BBBofC refused to grant the former world champion a license at the age of 55, 23 years after his last professional fight. The former two-weight world titleholder – known as "the Dark Destroyer" and memorable for his wars with Chris Eubank, Michael Watson and Gerald McClellan – confirmed his comeback fight for November 23 in Birmingham against another former beltholder in Sakio Bika, 40, of Cameroon, who last fought in October 2017.

Robert Smith, general secretary of the BBBofC told me that the risks are too great to consider licensing the British boxing legend.

"We were approached by Nigel Benn a few months ago inquiring whether we would grant him a license, but he was told that we would not consider it, given his age and how long he has been away

from the sport."

It meant the fight was instead sanctioned under the jurisdiction of BIBA in the way that David Haye and Dereck Chisora fought in 2012, under the auspices of the Luxembourg Board of Control. The BBBofC had suspended Chisora and refused to license him after his brawl with Haye at a press conference in Munich earlier that year. Benn is believed to be returning at light heavyweight, one weight class above the super middleweight division he ruled toward the end of his career, in a 10-round bout.

Benn's son, Conor, now a 23-year-old professional boxer himself with a record of 15-0 (10 KOs), revealed that his father's intention to return to the ring had been brought on by watching him box and train four years ago when his career started.

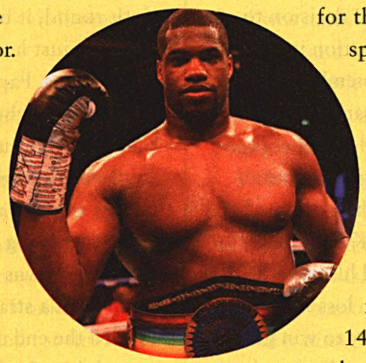
"He got the itch watching me train and wanted to have another fight," said Conor.

★★★

Daniel Dubois, the 22-year-old heavyweight rising through the ranks in British circles, with greater reach planned in 2020, was voted Best Young Boxer of the Year by the members of the Boxing Writers' Club (U.K.), the first heavyweight to win the award since former WBO titleholder Herbie Hide in 1993.

Twenty-seven of the winners since it began in 1951 have gone on to be world titleholders. The Geoffrey Simpson Award for Best Young Boxer of the Year was won in its inception year by Randolph Turpin. Since then, the luminaries have included Howard Winstone, Ken Buchanan, John H. Stracey, John Conteh, Barry McGuigan, Frank Bruno, Nigel Benn, Naseem Hamed, Joe Calzaghe, Ricky Hatton, Amir Khan and George Groves.

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for The London Telegraph.



The accolades for DDD continue to rack up.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

Romero Duno hadn't even been home in General Santos City for half an hour when news of his fight against Ryan Garcia hit the internet. The fight, which had been negotiated previously and failed to come to fruition, finally came together for the Canelo Alvarez vs. Sergey Kovalev card on November 2 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. It's the fight he's long wanted, but it's still bittersweet, as it means he'll soon be on the road again for training camp, away from the baby daughter he left at two weeks old for his last camp.

"Now again, he'll leave in one week," said Jim Claude Manangquil, who co-promotes Duno with Golden Boy Promotions. "He's excited for this fight. He wanted to spend more time with his baby, but this is the opportunity."

The fight had nearly been made twice, but the two camps couldn't reach an agreement for a September 14 date. Instead, the day before Duno and Garcia were to appear in separate bouts on a card in California, Garcia's opponent was arrested before the weigh-in. Golden Boy tried again to pair the two on 24 hours notice, but in vain, so Duno went on to stop Ivan Delgado in seven rounds.

Many wonder if Garcia (18-0, 15 KOs), a 21-year-old social media star, is ready for the step up, but Rodel Mayol, the trainer of the 23-year-old Duno (21-1, 16 KOs), says his guy is definitely prepared for the challenge.

"I saw Ryan Garcia's body is not ready for Duno," said Mayol, a former WBC junior flyweight titleholder. "Let's see if Garcia can take Duno's power. If he can, then we will (find a different way) to win."

The 12-round lightweight fight will be the co-main event on DAZN.

★★★

Duno's Sanman gym mate Reymart Gaballo (22-0, 19 KOs) made his Premier Boxing Champions debut on August 31, finishing the once-beaten Yeison Vargas in three rounds on the untelevised portion of the Erislandy Lara-Ramon Alvarez card. A body shot scored the first knockdown in the second, with two more knockdowns from head shots in the third. Manangquil says the plan is for Gaballo, 23, to have another fight before the end of the year and then face either Liborio Solis or Guillermo Rigondeaux, who is expected to move down to 118 pounds.

Gaballo sparred Rigondeaux a few years ago when he first relocated to Miami and, unsurprisingly, found the Cuban to be the slickest fighter he'd ever worked with. "He's not that slick as compared to before," said Manangquil of the now 38-year-old veteran.

The Philippines was guaranteed a new champ when Pedro Taduran and Samuel Salva met for the vacant IBF strawweight belt on September 7, but it's fair to say that most would have guessed it'd be Salva who would emerge on top. Instead, it was Taduran who rose up from a first-round knockdown and overwhelmed the previously unbeaten Salva, who retired on his stool after the fourth.

"He looked like a mini-Manny Pacquiao in there," said Sean Gibbons, the MP Promotions matchmaker who has become a modern Frank Churchill, the American manager who brought Pancho Villa, Pete Sarmiento and other Filipinos to the world stage in the 1920s.

Taduran has until the end of the year to try and get in a voluntary defense before his first mandatory, which will be ordered after January 7, Gibbons said.

★★★

Jerwin Ancajas will make the eighth defense of the IBF junior bantamweight title on November 2 in Carson, California, against Jonathan Rodriguez (21-1, 15 KOs), whom Gibbons describes as a "dead game, rough kid" from Mexico with nothing to lose. "He's not Israel Gonzalez, but he's not Carlos Cuadras; he's somewhere in-between,"

added Gibbons. The goal is to work their way into a fight with Juan Francisco Estrada, Gibbons says, and the hope is that an impressive performance can make the case that he's worthy.

★★★

John Riel Casimero will meet WBO bantamweight titleholder Zolani Tete on November 23 in London, the WBO announced after Tete's promoter, Queensberry Promotions, won a purse bid for the rights to the fight. Casimero, a former two-division champ who holds the WBO interim belt, had a quick tune-up on August 24, knocking out Cesar Ramirez in 10 rounds in Manila. Manny Pacquiao, who promotes Casimero, wasn't pleased with his stamina against Ramirez, Gibbons said, so Casimero will rejoin his old conditioning coach, Angel "Memo" Heredia, in Las Vegas, with boxing trainer Nonoy Neri to follow. Gibbons said Casimero will be joined by Jhack Tepora, who he says has a hard time staying focused in Los Angeles, along with Marlon Tapales to get in shape.

Speaking of Tapales, Gibbons says it's possible the former bantamweight titleholder could be named mandatory challenger to WBO junior featherweight champ Emanuel Navarrete, or he could face Ryosuke Iwasa for an interim IBF title, as the full champ, Daniel Roman, is injured.

Navarrete is coming off a fourth-round stoppage of a tough Juan Miguel Elorde, who gave it everything but was overmatched in their title fight on September 14.

★★★

What about the most famous Filipino Gibbons works with? Pacquiao will be back in the ring in the first four months of 2020, Gibbons says, when he's 41 years old. If Floyd Mayweather truly isn't entertaining anything more competitive than an exhibition match, that leaves few options that would be attractive for Pacquiao.

"You've got Danny Garcia, you've got Mikey Garcia and then it gets really thin. I don't think you can do three," said Gibbons. "My problem is Manny's not 31, he's 41, and he's proven everything he can in boxing. People say, 'Why don't you fight (Errol) Spence?' They don't want to see that fight … maybe some hardcore people. What does it prove if Manny beats him? Is he gonna be that much better of a Hall of Famer?"

Gibbons thinks that Mayweather still has an eye on Pacquiao, staying in shape for a planned exhibition in China, and that he thinks it can happen – if Mayweather is willing to fight longer than a three-round distance.

"The whole idea was to try and get one more Mayweather fight. That was the real deal," said Gibbons.

★★★

Eumir Marcial grabbed the nation's attention with his inspiring run at the 2019 World Championships in Russia, but ultimately left with the middleweight silver after dropping a 5-0 decision to Gleb Bakshi of the host nation in the gold medal match on September 21.

Marcial, 23, looked nearly unbeatable as he defeated opponents from Colombia, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan and Iran in the prelims, then dropped Kazakhstan's Tursynbay Kulakhmet in Round 1 and punished him to a 5-0 decision in the semis. The loss means the Philippines has still yet to win gold at the men's Worlds. Marcial's was the first silver since Harry Tanamor earned one at Chicago 2007. Before that, Roel Velasco also finished as the runner-up at Budapest '97.

The country sent five boxers to Russia, with flyweight Carlo Paalam making it to the quarters, featherweight Ian Bautista making it to the second round, lightweight James Palicte exiting in the first and Fil-British light heavyweight John Marvin winning his first bout against Lithuania, only to withdraw due to a cut sustained in that match.

Next up for the national boxers is a home game: the Southeast Asian Games in Manila from December 2-7, and then the Asia/Oceania Olympic qualifier the following month in China.

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SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

Just over two months removed from a fifth-round stoppage victory over Dmitry Kudryashov in a firefight of note, Johannesburg-based Congolese cruiserweight contender Ilunga Makabu was back in Russia, this time taking on undefeated Aleksei Papin in the chief supporting bout on the Sergey Kovalev-Anthony Yarde card.

Once again, Makabu and his opponent delivered the action. Papin, a former kickboxing champion, had a good start, being the busier fighter and moving well, but from the fifth onward, Makabu gradually stamped his mark on the fight. Papin landed hard shots, but after some heated exchanges in the sixth round, it became apparent that Makabu just had that little bit extra on his punches. Papin appeared to take a knee in the eighth round after a head-snapping right uppercut followed by a southpaw left from Makabu, but the referee ruled it a slip.

Despite being buzzed, Papin gathered himself and was coming on strong in the 10th when a straight left from Makabu toward the end of the round appeared to rock him. In the 11th, a series of left uppercuts, a right hook and another left uppercut had Papin badly hurt. A follow-up barrage had him slumped forward into the ropes and on the verge of a stoppage when the bell saved him.

Makabu went for the kill in the last round with three lefts – an uppercut, followed by a hook and capped off by a straight punch that sent Papin to the canvas. This time, Papin took the eight count. The Russian showed tremendous heart just when it looked like he was on his way out, biting down and fighting back, emptying his tank on Makabu to the approval of the crowd, but it was too little, too late.

The majority decision went Makabu's way by scores of 115-113, 114-113 and 114-114, and he moved his record to 26-2 with 24 knockouts. Papin, who dropped to 11-1 (10 KOs) can hold his head up high, as he gave a more than

respectable performance against one of the dangermen of the division.

★★★

At press time, the "Golden Boy" of South African boxing, junior lightweight Azinga Fuzile, was set to face by far the toughest test of his career in Russian Shavkat Rakhimov on September 29 – a final IBF world title eliminator in front of Fuzile's home crowd in East London. Both southpaws were undefeated at 14-0 going in. Both are in their athletic prime. It was set to be a classic boxer vs. puncher matchup, with Fuzile having the speed advantage, while Rakhimov, a devastating body-puncher, had the power edge with 11 knockouts compared to the eight of Fuzile. It doesn't get any better than this, and the entire South African boxing fraternity was biting its nails in the hope that Fuzile could clear this sizable hurdle and go on to challenge Tevin Farmer.

★★★

Simpiwe Konkco, The Ring's No. 5-ranked strawweight, will finally get his big break when he challenges WBC titleholder Wanheng Menayothin in Thailand on October 25. Konkco will, of course, be a solid underdog for this one. Not only is the fight in the champion's backyard, but at 53-0, Menayothin must know something about the sweet science. Add to that the fact that the South African will have had almost a year's worth of inactivity after all the false starts that have plagued his career, as well as his less-than-stellar performance in his last outing, when he had to get off the canvas against Joey Canoy in a fight that ended up as a headbutt-induced no-contest, and things are not looking good on paper.

However, fights are not fought on paper, and Konkco can draw inspiration from the fact that when it comes to South Africans snapping the reign of longtime titleholders, he will be in good company. In 1997, unknown Zolani Petelo traveled to Thailand and knocked out long-reigning IBF strawweight beltholder Ratanapol Sor Vorapin, and in 2013, Simphiwe Vetyeka dethroned 48-0-3 WBA featherweight titleholder Chris John. Like Konkco, they both hail from the Eastern Cape region of South Africa.

Droeks Malan is the South African correspondent for The Ring. You can reach him via Twitter @droeksonboxing and read his blogs on couchpotatofightguru.blogspot.com.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

The matchup between Ring Magazine bantamweight champion Naoya "Monster" Inoue and legendary Filipino veteran Nonito Donaire, set for November 7 at Saitama Super Arena, will be one of the biggest boxing events in Japanese boxing history. The official announcement for the World Boxing Super Series bantamweight tournament final was made at the end of August in Tokyo, and it included a WBC 118-pound title bout between defending titleholder Nordine Oubaali and Inoue's younger brother Takuma.

Ticket sales began just after the announcement, and in a couple of weeks, all went to the secondary market (in other words, the event sold out on the prime market). Before "Monster" started training camp mid-September, he appeared on several major media outlets to promote the fight. A popular TV documentary, Another Sky, featured the boxer visiting the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, which he called his "dream final destination to fight in."

He also talked about his training and showed his footwork routine. In and out, in and out, right and left, right and left. Simple and easy, but quite precise. "I do this every day, almost 20 years," he said with a smile as he kept doing it. It looked like a classic ballet lesson. Any world-class dancer spares more than an hour for this essential routine every day to correct postures in five foot positions to create their beautiful movements and poses on the stage (while hiding unimaginable pain). Inoue does this in boxing.

I remember his beautiful and perfect postures in a photo shoot for a textbook for children learning to box four years ago. No retake was needed. Angles of punches, positions of guard, stance and balance ... everything was always perfect without any advice from Hideyuki Ohashi, his manager and the supervisor of the book. Inoue's sensational KOs are based on his basic fundamentals.

"I am aware that this fight against Donaire would be a life-changing one," Inoue said on the podium beside the "Filipino Flash" during the press conference. We are sure to see the best of "Monster" on November 7. DAZN will stream the fight live in America.

★★★

Three-division titleholder Jorge Linares (46-5, 28 KOs) returned to the ring to beat Al Toyogon (10-5-1, 6 KOs) by unanimous decision on September 7 at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo. The 34-year-old veteran, fighting at 137 pounds this time but aiming to get back to the lightweight division, pressed the young Filipino with his signature sharp jabs and vicious body shots. While he was stumbled by a left hook to the head in the fourth round and bothered always by headbutts, which caused a one-point penalty on Toyogon in the fifth round, the victory was clear. Official scores were 100-89, 99-90, 99-90.

Linares drew a good audience that night. It was a little surprising for Japanese fans that such a big name appeared on an undercard of his stablemate Yuki Nagano's first defense of the Japanese welterweight title. It had been almost five years since Linares last fought in Japan and 12½ years since his last bout at Korakuen Hall, the mecca of Japanese boxing.

"People talked to me like, 'Hi, Linares! I'll come see your fight,' on the street. It means a lot to me," he said in fluent Japanese in the pre-fight interview by Nippon Television. "The hall is my favorite place, where I have fought many times. I feel like I'm debuting again."

Away from his native Venezuela, this Far East country is the second home for Linares, where he had his first pro fight at the age of 17 in December 2002. When he captured his first world title by stopping Oscar Larios in the 10th round for the vacant WBC featherweight belt in Las Vegas, he climbed onto the corner

post and shouted "Yatta!" which means "I did it" in Japanese.

Fans here love the charming star. After his departure from the cozy Korakuen Hall to the world scene, he won world titles in three different weight divisions. When he squared off with Vasiliy Lomachenko for a career-high $1 million purse in May 2018 at Madison Square Garden, he dropped the pound-for-pound king but lost his Ring Magazine and WBA lightweight titles in the end. He suffered another loss in January, when he was stopped in the first round after three knockdowns by the much bigger Pablo Cesar Cano of Mexico – Linares' second test fight in the 140-pound weight class.

Months later, Linares chose his home hall to restart. Korakuen Hall, the 57-year-old home of fighting sports, has a wall of golden nameplates of all the world champions based in Japan. Linares has three plates there already. "I want to add one more there. I want to be a world champion again," he said.

★★★

September may be a good month to restart one's boxing career. Masayuki Ito, the former WBO 130-pound titleholder, also was back in the ring to stop Ruben Manakane (25-19-1, 14 KOs) of Indonesia in the sixth round of a scheduled 10-round lightweight contest a week after Linares fought in the same venue. It did not go the way Ito might have expected, as a head clash aggravated his right eyelid in the first round. He went a little wild with his strong right hands trying to finish the fight as soon as possible before the eye was shut completely.

Ito decked the journeyman once in the fourth round and three times in the sixth round until the referee halted it. "It was my fault getting the headbutt," said the relieved 28-year-old. "Winning by KO was the last thing I was looking to do this fight, but I am happy to dedicate the first victory anyway to my new stable, Yokohama-Hikari."

Ito (26-2-1, 14 KOs) decided to come back soon after he lost his world title to Jamel Herring by unanimous decision in Kissimmee, Florida, in May. Although there had been no Japanese fighter to win a world title in America for 37 years until Ito did it against then-undefeated Christopher Diaz in July 2018, he did not make it out to be a remarkable deed.

"I need to do something more to be remembered in boxing history. I cannot walk away from boxing with the fight with Herring," said Ito in a video released by his new management, adding that he and his team are looking at both the 130- and 135-pound divisions to continue his comeback, which could include a rematch against Herring, a challenge to WBC junior lightweight beltholder Miguel Berchelt or a bout against former featherweight titleholder Oscar Valdez, who is moving up in weight. Ito says he's willing to return to the U.S. for these fights.

Yuriko Miyata has covered the Japanese boxing scene for more than 20 years.

CANADA

BY JAMIE REBNER

Ryan "The Real Deal" Ford, of Edmonton, Alberta, lost by controversial seventh-round knockout to top light heavyweight prospect Joshua Buatsi (12-0, 10 KOs) of the U.K. on the undercard of the Vasiliy Lomachenko-Luke Campbell lightweight championship on August 31. It was a competitive bout until the finish, the toughest of Buatsi's career thus far. After Buatsi landed a right hook to Ford's body in the seventh, he followed up with an illegal left hook to the body that landed below the beltline as well as an additional rabbit punch. Despite the referee having a clear vantage point, he didn't notice either infraction and failed to give Ford the recovery time that he was entitled to. Ford (16-5, 11 KOs) fell to the canvas and immediately complained to referee Robert Williams, who waved the fight off regardless.

"I told him (the referee) right away when it happened – and even my corner was yelling – and I'm down there and he started counting, and I'm like, 'What the hell is this guy counting for?'" said Ford. "Then I don't think he even counted to 10; I think he just counted me out. It's crazy, because the ref was right in the perfect spot to see the low blow. It's like he was watching it but he didn't want to see it."

At press time, Ford revealed that the British Boxing Board of Control has decided not to change the ruling from a knockout to a no-contest because Ford never complained in the moment. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. Ford and his team both independently complained to the referee as soon as the low blow occurred. In addition, the Ford camp spoke to the BBBofC official in the dressing room after the fight, who told them to file a formal complaint. And despite doing exactly that, they get no justice. Unfortunately, such is the case with boxing, with instances like these showing exactly why it is considered the red-light district of sports.

Ford issued the following statement to his fans via Instagram: "On the real, I knew nothing was going to happen; I'm not a Matchroom fighter. Just look at what happened to the last Canadian, Oscar Rivas, when he fought Dilllian Whyte. To all my fans, I'm sorry. This is the business I'm in; the B-side is never going to get a fair shake. If the fight went the 10 rounds and I lost a decision, I would be able to deal with that. But it didn't and I now I have a KO on my record, which was clearly not a knockout. All I can do now is train hard, get back in the ring and go to war again."

A knockout loss for Ford has the potential to adversely affect his career: "For me, I'm 37 years old. I was at that stage right there at the O2 Arena, and my next fight, if I would have stopped him or won that fight,

would have been even that much bigger and the payday would have been that much bigger as well. Now, me having a knockout on my record, that dampers it. Different promoters across the world will see that I was knocked out, which I wasn't, and they might want me to get another win before I can fight for some good money."

Unfortunately for Ford, he is all too familiar with the shady side of boxing. All five of his losses have come on the road in his opponents' backyards. It's another bitter pill to swallow for the Edmonton resident, who completely turned his life around after a stint in jail as a young adult. After he got out in 2007, he dedicated himself to mixed martial arts, amassing a record of 22-5, before deciding to focus on boxing in 2015. The son of Canadian lightweight Al Ford, who shared the ring with the likes of Ray Mancini, Ken Buchanan and Aaron Pryor, Ryan showed he can still compete with the best fighters in the world. I just hope he continues to get the chance to prove it.

"I'm a very mentally strong person," he said. "I'm not taking this fight as I would take a fight that I lost. Was I winning the fight? Probably not. Especially not on the scorecards, because it's not my home. But I still had three and a half rounds to win that fight and I wasn't given that chance. I'm already back in the gym and looking for other fights. The BBBofC suspended me for 45 days, so I'm looking to fight in 46 days. That's the thing about me; I'm always in the gym and always ready to go. If I can get a rematch against Buatsi, that would be awesome. But I'm not too keen that those guys really want that smoke again. They brought me in there thinking I was just going to give him rounds. Well I showed up, and I gave him more than rounds."

★★★

On September 8 in Hamilton, Ontario, Three Lions Promotions put on a card that saw Bradley Wilcox (9-0, 4 KOs) win an eight-round decision over Domingo Vasquez (7-3, 2 KOs) in the main event. In the co-main, undefeated cruiserweight Ryan Rozicki (11-0, 11 KOs) knocked out Khetag Pliev (5-1, 2 KOs) in the second round. Pliev, having wrestled for Canada at the 2012 Olympics and competed in MMA, brought toughness into the contest with Rozicki, which resulted in a short, action-packed brawl. Rozicki was cut badly in the second round and was being tested sternly until he came on and landed a devastating left hook to the liver that dropped Pliev and ended the contest. While Rozicki came away with the big win, the cut he sustained forces him to postpone his homecoming bout in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, from October 19 to February 14.

★★★

On September 13 in Edmonton, Alberta, featherweight titleholder Jelena Mrdjenovich (40-10-2, 19 KOs) defeated Marisol Corona (11-7-3, 4 KOs) in the non-title main event over eight rounds at the Shaw Conference Center. On the same night in Brooklyn, New York, Amanda Serrano (37-1-1, 27 KOs) outclassed a game but overmatched Heather Hardy (22-1, 4 KOs) by unanimous decision to claim a major belt in the same weight class. Unfortunately for Canada's Mrdjenovich, Serrano is more interested in a lucrative matchup with undisputed lightweight champion Katie Taylor, which would generate greater buzz and a better payday.

★★★

On September 14 in Brampton, Ontario, United Boxing Promotions put on a card that saw middleweight prospect Sukhdeep Singh Chakria (6-0, 2 KOs) win an eight-round shutout over David Romero (11-9-1, 5 KOs) in the main event. Sukhdeep is originally from India but now lives in Ontario. On the undercard, Shawndell Winters (12-2, 11 KOs) scored a monumental upset by emphatically stopping previously unbeaten Ukranian-Canadian Oleksandr Teslenko (16-1, 12 KOs) in the fifth round and claiming a minor heavyweight belt in the process.

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FEATHERWEIGHTS, BUT NOT FEATHER-FISTED

The cover story of this issue spotlights a mythical matchup between two of the most explosive (and popular) featherweights ever, but the sport delivered a real dream fight on December 4, 1975, by pitting two of the greatest punchers of all time in a 126-pound non-title bout at The Forum in Inglewood, California: Danny "Little Red" Lopez, who entered the anticipated showdown with 26 knockouts among his 27 victories, vs. fellow fan-favorite Ruben "Mr. KO" Olivares, who had scored 72 stoppages among his 80 wins. Olivares, a former two-time featherweight beltholder and legendary former bantamweight champ, started fast and confident but Lopez made his youth and size advantages evident by getting up from a flash knockdown to twice floor the Mexican star with monster right crosses in the opening stanza and again in Round 2. Olivares rallied in Rounds 3 and 4, cutting Lopez above his right eye, and he scored well with his savvy power-punch-on-the-fly style in Rounds 5 and 6. However, the stalking, sharpshooting Lopez put Olivares on his back in Round 7, and the groggy veteran was counted out while crawling to regain his footing. RING

COMING UP

Oscar De La Hoya (third from left) is proud to present Canelo Alvarez vs. Sergey Kovalev, plus Ryan Garcia in the co-featured bout, on November 2.

OCTOBER

OCT. 25 – Wanheng Menayothin vs. Simpiwe Konkco, strawweights (for Menayothin's WBC title), South Africa.
OCT. 26 – Josh Taylor vs. Regis Prograis, junior welterweights (for vacant Ring, Taylor's IBF and Prograis' WBA titles; WBSS final), London (DAZN). Also, Dereck Chisora vs. Joseph Parker, heavyweights; Ricky Burns vs. Lee Selby, lightweights.
OCT. 26 – Shakur Stevenson vs. Joet Gonzalez, featherweights (for vacant WBO title), Reno, Nevada (ESPN+).
OCT. 26 – Erickson Lubin vs. Terrell Gausha, junior middleweights, Reading, Pennsylvania (Showtime).

NOVEMBER

NOV. 2 – Sergey Kovalev vs. Canelo Alvarez, light heavyweights (for Kovalev's WBO title), Las Vegas (DAZN).
NOV. 2 – Miguel Berchelt vs. Jason Sosa, junior lightweights (for Berchelt's WBC title), Carson, California (ESPN).
NOV. 7 – Naoya Inoue vs. Nonito Donaire, bantamweights (for Inoue's Ring/IBF and Donaire's WBA titles), Saitama, Japan (DAZN). Also, Nordine Oubaali vs. Takuma Inoue, bantamweights (for Oubaali's WBC title).
NOV. 9 – Jamel Herring vs. Lamont Roach Jr., junior lightweights (for Herring's WBO title), Fresno, California (ESPN+).
NOV. 9 – Billy Joe Saunders vs. TBA, super middleweights (for Saunders' WBO title), Los Angeles (DAZN).
NOV. 23 – Andrew Cancio vs. Rene Alvarado, junior lightweights, Indio, California (DAZN).
NOV. 23 – Deontay Wilder vs. Luis Ortiz, heavyweights (for Wilder's WBC title), Las Vegas (Fox PPV).

DECEMBER

DEC. 7 – Andy Ruiz Jr. vs. Anthony Joshua, heavyweights (for Ruiz's IBF/WBA/WBO titles), Diriyah, Saudi Arabia (DAZN).

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